The Insider

A Life Inside the Personal Computer

A novel by Lefty Insider

About the Title

The Insider title relates Lefty's "Forrest Gump" like appearance within the seminal moments of the birthing and maturation of the personal computer, and the Internet.

Target Market

This novel is targeted primarily to a demographic of 10 million college educated Baby Boomer aged men. The proposed goal is to reach ten percent of this market, many of who now hold, or have held jobs in computer related fields. It has a Stanton-Wright Reading Grade score reading level of 10, which is described as Fairly Easy.

This book is a work of historical fiction. Apart from the well-known actual people, events, and locales that figure into the narrative, all names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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Synopsis

This compelling and sometimes edgy depiction of life events reveals a coming-of-age theme, as our young protagonist Lefty becomes engaged *inside* the creation and maturation of the first personal computer, and the evolution of the ARPANET into the Internet. The story follows him through a personal and professional maturation, while he lives out planned and unplanned life adventures.

The story holds riveting and humorous flashback adventures from our hero's youth through adulthood. The story line weaves through his involuntary military experiences, his family, his continuing education, and love of cars, baseball, and computers, and the formation of his idealism.

He creates positive impacts as an older and wiser adult, while holding elected and appointed public offices. He works through his disillusionment with corporate employment, escaping the golden handcuffs to create and operate his own computer businesses, while testing the latest computer operating systems. An unexpected joyous epiphany awakens him to previously unknown personal and professional possibilities. This metamorphosis changes his life, helps him find love, and allows him to recapture his youthful idealism, which included inventing and guiding a nonprofit agency, where he could put his passions to work for the underserved.

Written as a highly illustrated fictional third person narrative historical autobiography, the author uses first person short stories as a literary vehicle to backfill the stories of his main characters early life. He speaks of his children, girlfriends and wives, which include several adult situations. He speaks of an intellectual curiosity for technology, a passion for baseball, a love for cars, music, and a thirst for education, as he progressively reveals more of his life story, using a heavily footnoted and technically approachable vocabulary and style.

These stories form an unpredictable epic mosaic, which take the reader through a continuous rollercoaster of emotions of joyous to sad, curious to disgusted, from laughing aloud, to tears, to anger, and back and forth repeatedly.

Our main character refuses to be stymied, always pressing on to the next big thing, the next level. Not content with awards or accomplishments, he seeks not the comfort of repetition, but the creation and fulfillment of the next achievement.

The story evolves to reveal an extraordinarily compelling life profoundly influenced by idealism, his passions, and of his immersion in musical melody, harmony, and lyrics that tell stories. This coming of age story can be seen as a modern day Bildungsroman. 97k words, 343 pages.

Fair use rationale for illustrations & lyrics

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Prologue

Lefty was how he thought of himself, though it was not his given name or even a nickname. Certainly not the two full polysyllabic names he heard called when his behavior had caused sufficient distress for his mother.

At age nine, he did not just love baseball. He lived it and it consumed and defined him. The times when he was not playing baseball, were the times when he waited to play.[1]

A young fan once reportedly queried Pittsburg Pirates baseball Hall of Famer Honas Wagner if it was hard being a ballplayer. After some thought he answered, "There ain't much to being a ballplayer… if you're a ballplayer." Lefty was a ballplayer.

He would grow into a Little League Championship All-star pitcher, who once struck out 19 batters during a seven-inning game. He would strike out 38 across the final three games leading up to a championship playoff. As an outfielder, he could also throw a baseball from deep right field to home plate on the fly. His arm was not unlike a cannon atop a pitching mound, his hand gripping the baseball, fingers on its seams. He would blow his speed ball past hitters, causing them to swing the bat long after the ball already buried itself deep into the catcher's glove. Any batter daring to crowd home plate, would be knocked down at best, or hit at worst. He was not able to command any *off-speed* pitches, nor did he wish to.

The sole southpaw[2] from a large family, the clan would later grow, with the arrival of his six sisters, and three brothers. Lefty carried a discriminatory chip on his shoulder, as well as a then commonly inflicted dose of Catholic guilt. Later in life, this chip evolved into pride or perhaps a superpower, when he discovered a sinistral commonality with his favorite movie star actors, Michael Landon, Steve McQueen, musician Paul McCartney, and the genius Albert Einstein. He was often singled out for this trait, more common in boys than in girls, by his nun teachers and he paid a price with the application of rulers to his knuckles in

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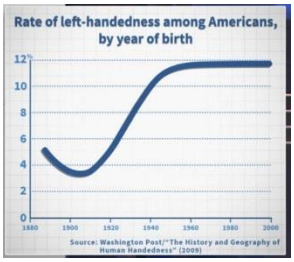
[1] *People ask me what I do in winter when there is no baseball. I will tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring. Hall of Famer, Rogers Hornsby*

[2] *Southpaw, baseball slang related to pitchers, when baseball diamonds had home plate to the west. Thus, the pitchers left arm would be oriented to the south.*

frequent and ultimately futile attempts to convert him. A genetic trait of his third generation German-American stubbornness ensured any desired change would not be imposed, but an ambidextrous lad emerged from parochial school into a right-handed world. This world then without the later adaptations of left-handed video cameras, wallets, scissors, pencil sharpeners, corkscrews, and other school and life related accessories. He still searches for American made left handed underwear briefs.



Apparently nature rules when you stop forcing kids to change.

When he reached 7 years of age, his dad would only buy him a right-handed baseball glove at a nearby small town hardware store. So he needed to learn to throw right handed. This first glove held the autograph of the Pittsburg Pirates right fielder Roberto Clemente. He watched Clemente play in the Saturday Game of the Week on TV, and during the 1960 World Series. As a boy, he would later get to watch him play in person at Milwaukee County Stadium against the Braves. With arms and legs flailing, Clemente roamed right field and ran the bases with his unique wild exuberance and abandon. He was a true *five tools*[3] player who excelled at throwing out imprudent runners trying to take an extra base. Opposing teams quickly learned that there was no money to be made with him there in right field. Lefty loved the manner in which number 21[4], played with a joyful and effort-driven determination, and he modeled himself in that mode. Lefty would later take the tragic early loss his boyhood hero rather hard.

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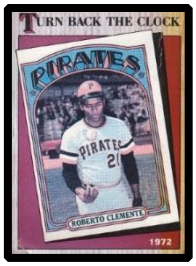
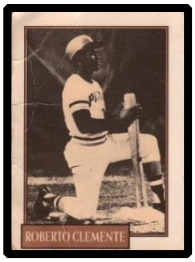
[3] *The five tools of great baseball players are running speed, arm strength, hitting for average, hitting for power, and fielding.*

[4] *Roberto Clemente was not just a super star baseball player, he was an activist, organizer, and humanitarian. His uniform number should have been retired as an well-deserved honor.*





The first World Series MVP to be born outside the US

Four decades later, he would write on the Clemente Retire 21 website blog:

> I support the retirement of Roberto Clemente's number!
>
> My first baseball glove at age 7 was etched with Roberto's autograph. Those days I could only watch him play on TV or during the rare visit to County Stadium when the Pirates played the Braves.
>
> I ended up becoming an All-Star Little League pitcher, but the skilled use of my glove, my arm strength, my attitude came from copying Roberto, which got me that position. I learned to play the game watching Roberto, which in turn made me a successful ballplayer.
>
> As the great Yogi Berra once said "If you can't copy him, don't imitate him."

Clemente statue outside the current Pittsburg ballpark

Lefty loved baseball, but he would also come to love cars, The Beatles, most rock and roll music, computers, and girls.

Table of Contents

Contents

About the Title 2
Target Market 2
Synopsis 3
Fair use rationale for illustrations & lyrics 4
Prologue 5
Table of Contents 8
Chapter One, Freedom 10
A diversion 16
Chère Avril 18
Back on track 25
Chapter Two, Expendable 49
Chapter Three, Entrepreneur 74
Adaptive Computers 78
Personal Computers Advance 83
Customers 85
Chapter Four, Family 89
My Growing up, Story One 96
My Growing up, Story Two 101
Chapter Five, The Internet 107
Chapter Six, Cars 114
Speedshops 119
My Growing up, Story Three 126
Chapter Seven Baseball 132
Yankee stadium 133
Wrigley Field 137
My Growing up, Story Four 142

Chapter Eight, Monopoly 147
An Epiphany..... 161
Chapter Nine, The Nonprofit 186
School Board..... 190
Redoubling his nonprofit efforts 194
A Manifesto 223
Kynthia returns 227
My Growing up, Story Five..... 231
My Growing up, Story Six..... 238
Chapter Ten, Dating Again 243
My Growing up, Story Seven 251
Chapter Eleven, The End Is Near..... 255
My Growing up, Story Eight..... 265
My Growing up, Story Nine 275
Chapter Twelve - Windows 8..... 279
My Growing up, Story Ten..... 295
My Growing up, Story Eleven..... 301
Your Growing up, Story One..... 305
Your Growing up, Story Two 313
Epilogue 323
Up Next..... 324
Afterword 325
A playlist of musicians & music 332
Questions for the author..... 334
The Black Album Playlist..... 336
About the author 342
Acknowledgements..... 342

Chapter One, Freedom

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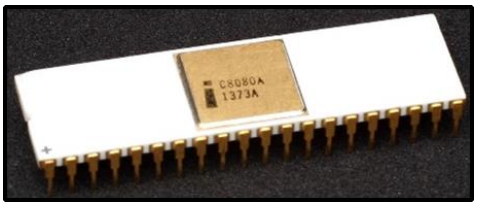
Lefty felt reinvigorated, having been honorably discharged from the Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina 23 months plus 29 days following the loss of his personal freedom. With the Army in his rearview.[5] at twenty-two years of age, he was destined to reclaim his American birthright of self-determination and the ability to follow his dreams and passions.

This new world reopened to him at about the same time Bill Gates and Paul Allen left Boston to travel to Albuquerque. They had seen the same Popular Electronics magazine with an Altair computer adorning the cover. The young duo negotiated a contract to write the code for the BASIC[6] software for this Altair microcomputer.[7] Their customer was Ed Roberts at his company called Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems (MITS). At the time, MITS was a financially failing electronic calculator manufacturer. Roberts realized that his newly designed Altair computer needed software. It needed a computer language to make this computer useful. Bill and Paul also recognized the need for a language, but because no BASIC language yet existed for the recent Intel 8080 processor chip, they presented Ed with an offer to create the BASIC version.



The Intel i8080 processor chip
Image Courtesy: Intel.com

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[5] Authors note: much more about that in Chapter Two
[6] BASIC, Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code
[7] Altair, named after the brightest star in the constellation Aquila, and also the name of a star from the popular TV series Star Trek

Altair the computer

Altair the star

Wanting to travel as far away from Army life as he could, Lefty headed out of North Carolina for the Alaska oil fields accompanied by his Army friend "Box" to help build an oil pipeline. Box was a tall and gangly southerner with a slow talking Mississippi drawl and dry sense of humor. Despite his traditional southern bigoted racial ideas, the two hit it off and became friends immediately. It was Box who lobbied hard for this idea. He brought some prior experience in the pipeline business to his idea. Due to the ongoing Middle East oil embargo, they thought this would be both patriotic and lucrative especially during an economic recession, when jobs were scarce. Nixon recently took the US off the gold standard[8] and created economic wage and price controls[9], which had hurt the economy.

The Alaska pipeline, 800 miles of four-foot pipe, was designed to move oil from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez. The pipeline was to be built between 1974 and 1977 after the 1973 oil crisis caused a sharp rise in US oil prices. The project was expected to attract tens of thousands of construction workers to Alaska, and was anticipated to make boomtowns out of Valdez, Fairbanks, and Anchorage.[10]

Opposition movements launched legal campaigns to halt the pipeline and prevented construction from 1970 to 1973.

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[8] *A gold standard is a monetary system in which the standard economic unit of account is based on a fixed quantity of gold.*

[9] *Wage and price controls are used to respond to economic inflation, and seek to establish wages and prices below the free market level.*

[10] *In 2006 the largest spill in the history of the pipeline occurred, when more than a quarter million gallons of oil spilled onto the virgin tundra.*

Then President Nixon signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, whereby Native groups would renounce their land claims in exchange for money and millions of acres of their previously stolen native and now Federal land. The money and land was split up among village and regional corporations, which would then distribute stock shares to the Natives. These shares paid dividends based on both settlement and corporation profits.

Nature loving Lefty thought this might just be environmentally responsible due to an Alaska law that required the oil company to remove any traces of the pipeline after oil extraction ended roughly fifty years later. The parallel maintenance highway however contained no such provision.

Lefty and Box both served in the 802nd construction engineers at Ft. Bragg, and Lefty in the South Korea UN Peacekeeping force. Together they formed a plan to work hard for a few years, and earn tons of tax-free money to fund a college education or perhaps a business.

Life is short Lefty thought. During his time in South Korea, his boyhood idol baseball player Roberto Clemente died in a plane crash as he embarked on a New Year's Eve mission of mercy to Central America. The deranged warmongering Quaker Nixon[11] ordered the bombing of Hanoi, killing many civilians on Christmas Eve despite being the celebrated birthday of the Prince of Peace; taught by his grade school nuns to love. This killing occurred despite Jane Fonda's brave trip there. From Korea, they heard about the economic recession and gasoline rationing. The world appeared to be going to hell fast.

So they left out of Ft. Bragg, inexplicably named in honor of a Confederate Army commander in the Civil War succession and rebellion. Box riding shotgun, in Lefty's 1962 four-door baby blue Buick LaSabre, with the $99.95 Earl Shibe[12] *100 foot paint job*, looking good from at least 100 feet away. He bought the car from a guy on base as he left for home, the deal made for $25 cash money. The seller did not have the title, but he did have an invalid Missouri registration, and expired Delaware license

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[11] *Richard Milhous Nixon served as the 37th President and became the only U.S. president to resign from office in disgrace.*

[12] *Earl Scheib, is a company that specialized in automobile repainting and was famous for his slogan, "I'm Earl Scheib, I'll paint any car, any color for $19.95. No ups, no extras." By 1970, the price was $99.95, still a low price at the time.*

plates. Lefty did not care much as he held a suspended Illinois driver's license, but the seller agreed to send the title when he got back home. He never did and when Lefty applied for a duplicate, he discovered that there was a bank lien on the car. Undeterred, he got a junkyard replacement title, a new driver's door window, four retread tires, and the Buick was good to go.

The Buick

Rolling down the pavement now, they headed towards Mississippi for Box to visit his folks and pick up some personal things at home for the trip. Lefty talked him into a small detour, through Albuquerque as they headed north. He had also read about this new revolutionary Altair computer in the most recent edition of Popular Electronics magazine, from the geek user-group pipeline, and knew that Gates and Allen were there now.

They rolled into Albuquerque, found MITS housed in a rundown strip mall, and met Bill and Paul of the then Micro-Soft company. They hit it off right away, Bill young, baby faced and intense, and Paul older, bearded, and more laid back. They noticed Lefty's interest and explained that they and Ed needed someone to build hardware emulator circuit boards.[13] In addition to BASIC for the Altair, they also committed to write BASIC for the Apple II, and Radio Shack's TRS-80.

A talent for building circuit boards Lefty had acquired from his high school electronics class, where he built a nine-volt transistor radio. This primitive device was housed inside a clear-topped former plastic cotton swab box. Ed was an electrical engineer by trade, and designed the boards. Lefty and Box then assembled and tested them. Ed and Lefty, like-minded in that he did not care for writing software code, which just seemed like *variable hardware* to them. Lefty had some prior experience with the FORTRAN programming language in high school, but

[13] *In computing, an emulator is hardware that enables one computer system to behave as another computer system, as a verification tool for complex designs.*

concluded this activity to be only for math loving, propeller-beanie-headed nerds, and not for gear heads and hardware geeks like them. They needed to feel and touch their machines.

With their detour now having lasted a few weeks, Box became bored and decided to continue north to Alaska. Lefty wished him happy trails and sent him off with the Buick.

Micro-Softs Gates and Allen

Gates, Allen, as well as Lefty had all become intrigued with the appearance of the first iteration of a personal computer, and with an idea of what could someday be possible.

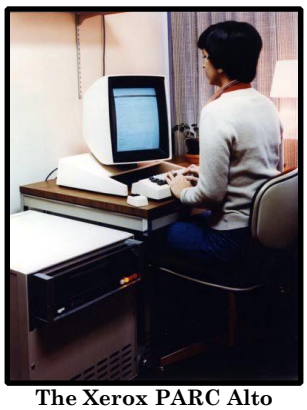
Lefty always loved machines, and dreamed of future machines like the Altair and beyond. He thought there might be something here, something unique, something interesting that made him curious. Something he did not then know then would continue to interest him for more than forty years.

Meanwhile Lefty spotted a Ford Econoline van sitting at a nearby farm. He made the purchase for $100 cash money. Lefty's landlord had a Quonset hut shop next to the one bedroom, converted garage Lefty rented for living quarters. Over several evenings, he pulled the little inline six-cylinder engine out and rebuilt it the shop using the skills developed while still in high school. The six-cylinder inline engine was light enough two guys with ropes could walk the engine out the back doors of the van. When the engine work was completed, he installed an eight-track tape deck, spray painted the van a brown primer color.

The corncrib rescue van

Lefty continued working with Ed and M-S in Albuquerque for several years until Bill and Paul decided to move their company north to suburban Seattle, to be better able to recruit programmers. Ed decided to shutter the business and go to law school and become an old country doctor. Lefty did not want to live in a rain forest, so he packed up the Econoline and headed west to a place he heard about in California called Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, or PARC, he decided to check it out.

Impressed with his work history and glowing references from Ed, Bill, and Paul, PARC hired him to build prototype hardware for a project to replace the existing Alto minicomputer, with a new model called the Star. The only catch was the job would not commence for another year. The Star development team headed by David Liddle would eventually grow to a few hundred developers. They would take a year to plan and develop the specifications to define the interface to ensure consistency within software modules and tasks.



The Xerox PARC Alto

The Alto[14] was based on a graphical user interface using windows, icons, and a mouse, and worked together with other Altos over a local area network. It could also share files and print out documents on an advanced Xerox laser printer.

[14] *In 1977, the Carter White House technology department installed a Xerox Alto in the Oval Office. President Reagan later had it removed.*

A diversion

Secure in his next adventure but having one year to wait, the young, restless, and idealistic Lefty joined the US Peace Corps to work in Africa. West Africa was the closest program that Peace Corps had. He wanted to try to do what he could to help feed starving people on that continent.

This widespread scarcity of food, was caused by crop failures, population imbalances, and government policies. It brought with it the malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality he had seen photos about and in LIFE magazine.

Before he left for French speaking West Africa, he decided that he didn't want to look or feel stupid on arrival and that he should learn some language basics like counting, the alphabet, telling time and such. He found a French tutor through the local university, her name was April or Avril in French. She was tallish, thin, small breasted, and with short cropped hair, quite beautiful. She was smart, warm, Midwest girl but very French, and way out of his league. She was unlike an girl he had ever known, but nonetheless he was soon smitten. Their month long tutoring sessions several times per week, became excuses for dates to him. They first met on campus, but then at local parks, at restaurants for meals to learn food terminology. He discovered his favorite desert, and discovered that his favorite French word was *mousse au chocolat*. He just liked the way it rolled off his tongue, and who could not like chocolate pudding.

They saw local attractions that combined some fun into their sessions. He loaded their bicycles into his van and they traveled long distances to scenic state parks for bicycle trips, and to have picnics out in the country. They walked the stairways in the parks, counting each step together aloud in French as a learning exercise. She had a flirtatious bubbly personality, that made these tutoring sessions fun. The more they were together, the more he wanted to be with her. She kept him at arm's length and mostly held off his advances, except for some causal necking and petting.

They had long conversations about his past experiences and they spoke of their hopes and dreams, and how she admired what he was attempting to do.

Shortly before he left for Africa, she came to visit him at his place and they made love for the first time. She felt like no other woman had for him. He wanted more, wanted to know her better, but he had to go. She was gone, and vanished from his life, forever.

Once in Africa, he decided to write her some letters to stay in contact and let her know what he was experiencing. With the help of his more fluent roommate, he put some of this into French.

Chère Avril

July

Here I am in the Ivory Coast of French West Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer. J'étais un volontaire de corps de paix, les Etats-Unis d'Ameica. Even though I was offered only one choice on program selection, and very little information, despite persistence, or answers responsive to my questions about this job, I am, undeterred, and perhaps naively idealistic, having left the North American continent as a young man yet again. This time by my choice.

My friends and family told me I was naïve and that I couldn't change the world, but Peace Corps had a saying that "you wouldn't change the world, but it wouldn't be the same either." While here I have also learned of an old West African proverb which roughly translates to "if you think you are too small to have an impact, try spending a night inside a room with a few mosquitoes."

I am living in Abidjan, having traveled via San Francisco, and Atlanta for meetings first, and then to New York City, and a 14 hour flight with a stopover in Dakar. The night before the flight, I joined with some of my co-volunteers, mostly English teachers having master's degrees in French, (you would like them) geologists, and water purification people, and we watched a night baseball game at Turner Field in Atlanta. The Braves got slaughtered 14-4 by the Dodgers, but this is unfortunately quite common for the Braves now in the seventies.

Here on the Dark Continent, I had cultural and language training for several weeks, (because of your help I have a head start) living with our group in an unoccupied girl's school dormitory in Abidjan for the summer.

The food is OK but the showers are cold. It is tropically lush here and the jungle seems to want to encroach everywhere if not continuously beaten back. It is also very humid here at the equator, and each morning I get to dry my face in a towel infested with mildew.

I brought along a portable eight-track player system and prerecorded tapes of the Beatles, McCartney, Neil Young, and others. I borrowed my younger brothers eight-track recorder before leaving to make these tapes. I do have some trouble with the tapes because of the heat and humidity, and I need to splice and re-spool them frequently.

My gay California born roommate questioned me as to why I was listening to the Beatles White album rather than the current popular music. I told him that this music was classic and as timeless as Bach or Beethoven, and thus would be great forever. Another PC volunteer would sometimes come to this part of the dorm to read and listen to my music. He claimed to have been at Woodstock, perhaps one of the millions who claimed to have been among the half million actually there. I also just purchased the Frampton Comes Alive eight-track, in an Abidjan store at a high cost. This tape holds a mesmerizing live concert performance. Will write again soon. I miss your face.

Chère Avril

August

After training, I traveled to the north of the country to work for, a French corporation named SO.DE.RIZ (Society for the Development of Rice Agricultural) as part of an agriculture improvement project. This agency was involved with the introduction of three levels of agricultural technology into this part of the country. I did this type of work for my dad as a teenager, in the Army, and while in college, so I knew some things about the operation, maintenance, and repair of equipment and diesel engines.

I have my own small house to live, and a vehicle to use. I declined the first house they offered, an overly large and palatial place. It was just too decadent. That is not what I am here for. I refuse to be just another colonizer.

The first technology level introduced here involves the use of water buffalo to plow and plant. This idea is of course centuries old in Asia, but is a new technology here in Africa, and is called animal traction. The second level technology uses machines which look like large garden tillers, but are large enough to have a seat, and to hitch up a wagon to drive on the road. I saw these earlier in South Korea. The third level of technology, where I work, uses the same kind of tractors, plows, and combines we use in the US. There are big open rice fields similar to the oats and wheat grain fields there, except here there are monkeys swinging from tree lines at the edges of fields.

The larger project where I work uses the highest level of technology for an agricultural project designed to grow rain fed rice (pluviale) rather than irrigated paddy rice. This allows additional bushels to be produced using less time and with less effort, and should thereby improve local nutrition. The standard diet here, unlike Asia, consisted of the root of a cornstalk-like cassava plant. The dried and shredded root gives the appearance, texture, and has the approximate nutritional value of sawdust. This is the traditional diet of the natives, and is typically served with a very spicy tomato sauce, containing hot peppers.

The local farmers financed this equipment via a Co-op, setup by the French corporation and use the harvest proceeds to make payments on the equipment. However, I soon learned that the corporation then sold the rice harvest into the world market, at world market prices. This pretty much ensures that this indigenous population produces crops they will never be able to afford to buy. This is just a modern day continuation of the colonization from earlier decades, and another reminder of my experiences in Korea. This experience only fuels the disillusionment, being the proto typical ugly American, carrying over from my prior military service.

Despite this, I visited each machine, through dense jungles and the frequently washed out roads. I met village chiefs and discovered that no maintenance was ever performed on any of these machines. Was worse was that

the Italian tractors, Belgian self-propelled combines, and Norwegian pull behind combines looked to be in rough shape. Tractor steering tie rod ends were broken, from the bad roads, and wired in place with baling wire. I found missing and broken parts, and with no spare parts or blacksmith shops available, this presents real difficulties for repair. No one had thought to order the high maintenance spare parts to accompany this equipment. Repair parts I was told, would take months to arrive from Europe. Combines were operated not have their bearings being greased, but I got some grease guns issued to the operators and instructed them on their use. I talked the bosses into providing me some tools, and drove to the capital Abidjan, to purchase them. I didn't get what I wanted, but got enough to do some things.

Using the assistance of a language translator, I created this bilingual maintenance binder with a tab for each Co-op machine to identify when maintenance was required and record when it was last performed. Once completed, my bosses told me, "That's nice," but we will never use it. Peace Corps must have "forgotten" to share the job description document given me, with this corporation.

I work long days here helping through the harvest season. Loose harvested rice from the combines is dumped into big piles inside the local village and covered with tarps to keep the rain off. The small tractor pulled combines bag the rice on a standing platform and the bags are dropped

in the field. These are later picked up with trucks, and stored in the local village thatched roof huts.

I got sick at least twice having malaria despite taking the issued pills to prevent this. I am losing some of weight here, the available food being neither good, nor plentiful. I don't particularly enjoy rice, which I can personally afford on my stipend. I do find some potatoes occasionally. One of my favorite lunches, involves making multiple stops, first at the side of the road plywood shack to buy a loaf of French bread, then to the market for tomatoes. The tribal women merchants, who speak one of many tribal languages but no French, create small piles of mixed size tomatoes for stewing, with a price for each pile on their tables. I pick out the largest ones for slicing from each pile, and they fuss, but I don't barter and I pay them whatever they want. Finally, I stop at the grocery shop, run by a French couple, to buy some cheese. They sell this cheese called La Vache Qui Rit, or as you know The Laughing Cow. It comes as foil wrapped triangles of a spreadable cheese in a round cardboard container. I bring my purchases home, slice the loaf of bread lengthways, spread the cheese, and place the sliced tomatoes across the length. This makes for a fast and tasty lunch, at least considering where I live. Sometimes I can find canned sardines in the store, and make a sandwich by putting them in some French bread as well.

I work with several Chinese workers and it is surreal for me as an American, to be communicating with Chinamen, in French.

I am missing you more than I could have ever imagined missing anyone. I love you dearly.

Je vous manque tellement que je n'aurais jamais imaginé avoir manqué. Je t'aime beaucoup.

Peace Corps had become involved in this project in an effort to improve local diets, I was told. The big idea being to grow the more nutritional rice more effectively within the paddies using animals for power, and on newly deforested dry land with *pluviale* or rain fed rice using large modern machinery.

Lefty did not know he would be assigned to a French/Ivorian corporation, rather than to an NGO[15], or better yet assigned to work within some specific village. This corporation decided that more profit was available selling this rice on the world market, which in turn made the food unaffordable to most of the people who had grown it. He recognized this for what it was, the continuing rape and plunder of the countries resources post colonization, as the colonizers had done for the previous hundreds of years.

He also had recently learned that SO.DE.RIZ now had also decided to bill out his time for working with the local farmers.

Brooding over this dilemma, he searched without success for alternate placements. In the end he decided that he would not participate in perpetual colonization, and came back home early. He would not become just another corporate mechanic cog in this colonization machine. Similar to his experience in Korea, his eyes were now clearer on the dirty ways of the world.

[15] *A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a not-for-profit organization that remains independent of state and international governmental organizations.*

Back on track

When he came back from Africa early, with help from PARC he pursued an offered opportunity to fill-in the remaining time with an internship at their partner company called Intel, until his job at PARC commenced. Integrated Electronics or "Intel" for short, then still a small company but would later become one of the world's largest and highest valued semiconductor chipmakers. Intel's employee number three Andy Grove worked for the co-founders the talented Gordon Moore and the brilliant Robert Noyce.

Intel had created the first commercially available microprocessor, the Intel 4004 in 1971 and one of the first microcomputers later in 1972. The lucrative dynamic random-access memory chips (DRAM) however became its core business, but eventually increased competition from semiconductor manufacturers dramatically reduced the profitability. At about the same time, the growth and interest in the Apple II, the Altair and others, grew the value of computers based on an Intel microprocessor. Gordon Moore soon shifted the company's focus to microprocessors. As Grove's technical assistant, Lefty learned a great deal about this technology and obtained some excellent work experience while there. Intel provided the freedom to explore your own ways and means of getting things done. Getting up to speed with current projects, took a while but eventually he did manage to accomplish some relevant work. The "integrated circuit" as well as one of the first microcomputers, which later enabled the birth of the personal computer, was invented there.

After his internship expired, he found PARC to be a great place to work, and he was able to use a new telecommunications connection to the ARPANET, now known as the Internet. He used this nascent network to communicate via email to other locations working on the project.

Ethernet pioneer Bob Metcalfe

There he met Bob Metcalfe, the creator of Ethernet networking, Vint Cerf, co-creator of the TCP/IP network protocol, Doug Engelbart[16], co-creator of the computer mouse with Bill English, and others. He saw many visitors visit PARC including Steve Jobs, and old friends Paul Allen, and Bill Gates.

The Xerox Star

At PARC, he worked with a computer known as Dandelion or "Dlion", a version of the Star. This Dlion used a micro-programmed CPU, based on Advanced Micro Devices AMD's, Am2900 bit slice microprocessor technology.[17] The performance of this machine, which sold for about $20,000, was comparable to the DEC VAX that cost five times as much. The addition of a monitor, mouse and keyboard, made this computer system exude a real personal feel to him. This experience would be prescient, especially when compared to the light-flashing, headless Altair he worked with in Albuquerque.

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[16] *Douglas Carl Engelbart was an early computer and Internet pioneer whose work resulted in the creation of the computer mouse, the development of hypertext, networked computers, and the precursors to graphical user interfaces. These were first demonstrated at The Mother of All Demos in 1968.*

[17] *The base Dandelion system had 384 kB memory, an 8-inch hard drive, 8-inch floppy drive, a mouse, and an Ethernet connection.*

Star used an updated graphical user interface from the Alto, later *borrowed* by Apple for the Mac, Digital Research for the GEM environment, and finally for Microsoft for Windows.[18]

As his primary job, Lefty setup and demoed these systems to various executives inside divisions of the corporation. He also installed Ethernet networking connections and a recently invented paper image printer, known as a laser printer.

Regrettably for Xerox, they only envisioned this new personal computer as part of a multiple unit office system, not unlike the thinking of other workstation makers at the time. They never got serious about bringing the cost down for smaller businesses or end users. Political turf fights, and misguided strategies to compete against IBM became responsible for the series of failures preventing the bringing this product to market.

As the 1970s became the 1980s, Lefty read the handwriting on the wall regarding Xerox. He had recently heard news through the grapevine about a skunkworks[19] project called Project Chess down in Boca Raton, Florida run by none other than IBM. Maybe the great behemoth IBM can figure out how to build and market an open and affordable personal computer that he and many others wanted to own, Lefty thought.

A high mileage blue 1964 Chevy two-door Impala, replaced the primer brown van, which was economical, but too powerless to tolerate any longer. He loaded up the Chevy to head south and work for the buttoned up IBM Company. The Chevy, a "fill up the oil and check the gas" type vehicle; required that he keep a five-gallon can of discount engine oil in the trunk. He had also relocated the valve cover breather hose output to the inoperative windshield washer reservoir tank to capture and to settle the engine combustion blow-by. From time to time, he would dump the collected liquid oil back into the engine.

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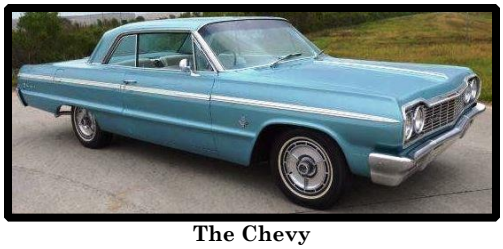
[18] *The US court system later deemed patent lawsuits by Xerox against Apple, and Apple against Microsoft over the interface design essentially irrelevant.*

[19] *A skunkworks project is a small loosely structured group of people whose primary goal is radical innovation. At large organizations, this requires that a team be removed from the normal working environment to be given freedom from the usual management constraints.*



The Chevy

The Chevy reminded him of an old story about two Texas ranchers who liked to boast about how much land they each owned. One bragged that he could drive the whole day in his car and not be off his land. The other slyly replied that he had once owned a car like that too.

With his toolbox in the trunk, Lefty headed towards the southeast part of Florida, with a planned stop to visit his buddy Box traveling through Choctaw, Mississippi. It turns out that Box made a lot of money working the pipeline in Alaska, came back to invest in a company called Apple Computers, and had become rich. This fruit-named company sold something called the Apple II as fast as they produced them, with no viable competition. He caught up with Box on the latest news, swapped old stories, and lies, and then headed off to Boca. He pulled into the old town, originally settled by the Spanish, and made his way through town to the IBM's complex and to Building 051.

Hired again based on his unique resume, stellar references, and experience, the job offer came with company car, expense account, retirement plan, and healthcare benefits.

His company car, a 1981 four door Plymouth Reliant known as a K-car, provided barely enough power from the small four-cylinder engine to get out of its own way. Driving at highway speed, he would need to shut off the air conditioner to have enough power to pull out and pass another car. The speedometer only read-out to 80 mph, but on a deserted road, down a big hill, with a tail wind, on *just* the right day, it was possible to make the speedometer peg then bounce back. The height of the needle bounce realistically determined the speed, he thought.

Later on, he and his coworkers sometimes attended regional training meetings at local hotel conference centers. One evening their group ambled down to the bar for a beer. One of the guys had declined and after a few beers, their discussion turned to

playing a trick on this *piker*. They all met in the hotel parking lot, got their space saver spare tires from their trunks, and installed four of them on this guy's car. The next morning, he tried to leave the parking lot, but sitting so close to the ground, the car's frame hung up on the ramp to the road and he was stuck. This guy was steamed, but they all got a kick out of this *beer-inspired* mischief.

These K-cars were also equipped with an in-dash CB radio, apparently for communication with other employees, but Lefty found some use for it to talk to truckers about the road conditions and where the *Smokey's*[20] were hiding. "Breaker one-nine, good buddy" was the call he made. So he had that going for him — which was nice.[21]

The K-car

As part of their new employee orientation, they settled into a conference room, with an IBM executive of the IBM Entry Systems Division being the main speaker. He told us that with the IBM PC the company needed to execute on three things. Keep costs down, build a better computer than the Apple II, and out sell the Apple II. Two years later, *they did, it was, and it did.*

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[20] *Some state troopers wear hats similar to that worn by Smokey Bear, a forest ranger cartoon character warning people not to start forest fires. In CB language, the police became known as 'smokeys' or 'bears'.*

[21] *A derelict assistant groundskeeper living in a golf course maintenance shed tells a story about being a caddy for The Dalai Lama: "So we finish the eighteenth... and he's gonna stiff me on a tip. And I say, "Hey, Lama, hey how about a little something, you know... for the effort, you know?" And he says, "Oh, uh, there won't be any money, but on your deathbed, you will receive total consciousness." "**So I got that goin' for me… which is nice.**" From the 1980 comedy film, Caddyshack.*

The original IBM PC

Lefty saw a few machine prototype mockups on display at the orientation. What the hell is this, he thought. Low-resolution amber monochrome display? No hard disk drive? No Ethernet? This how the price comes down? "Well at least they finally dumped the eight inch floppy for a pair of five and a quarter inch models," Lefty mumbled to no one in particular. No WYSIWYG[22] no GUI screen, DOS? What the hell is DOS?

To save time and get to market faster[23], IBM built this machine with commercial off-the-shelf parts purchased from original equipment manufacturers or OEM's, whenever possible, with assembly being done in Boca. The vendors included Intel for the 8088 CPU chip, Microsoft[24] for the disk operating system or DOS, and using a North Carolina IBM factory to build the keyboard. They used a New York factory for printed circuit boards, a Taiwanese company for the display monitor, and the Japanese Epson company supplied printer. Other vendors included Tandon for the 5.25-inch diskette-drives, and later Seagate for a 20MB ST-225 hard disk drive with a Western Digital controller card.

For several years, Lefty demonstrated and displayed these units around the state of Florida. The "K" car trunk and back seat were full of computers for his frequent trips. He also created training manuals and conducted training sessions for dealer and company personnel. During this time, he visited Disney World, SeaWorld, and Cape Canaveral traveling across Florida. He

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[22] *WYSIWYG is an acronym for "what you see is what you get." In computing, a WYSIWYG display closely resembles the displayed page when printed.*

[23] *The normal time from design to market for an IBM mainframe was four years.*

[24] *Founded in April 4, 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen, Microsoft is one of the largest most successful companies in the world.*

barely missed seeing a Space Shuttle launch when he was in the area, as they had delayed the blastoff at the last minute.

Lefty created the training manuals at the time, not by computer, but instead were *hand written* on yellow legal pads with pen, or a "BIC word processor", as he called it. A department assistant then typed these pages into the company IBM System/36 minicomputer and printed out the pages with only limited typeface fonts available. He would use a photomechanical transfer machine or PMT, to image the printouts onto photo paper, trim and wax them down onto layout sheets. Graphics would be hand drawn by a department graphic artist on velum paper, mounted on art boards, and then imaged, trimmed and waxed down alongside the text. He would use many colorized 11x17 foldout schematics and diagrams in the books. He would consistently tax the departmental budget with his high quality work. He would then transfer the whole thing to a PMT, to send off to aluminum printing plate production, and then on to reproduction on the printing press. Better than setting lead type by hand as he had done in high school he thought, but not by a lot.

IBM System/36 Minicomputer and Control Panel

Lefty produced cutaway-training aids of component parts, large colored charts showing internal system boards, with a clear plastic-covered model computer for demonstrations. He prepared color overhead transparency films to diagram current flows. He applied this special film tape atop the electrical current paths drawn on the transparencies. When placed on an overhead projector, with a transparent spinning wheel

attachment. This created the visual illusion of directional movement within the taped current paths.

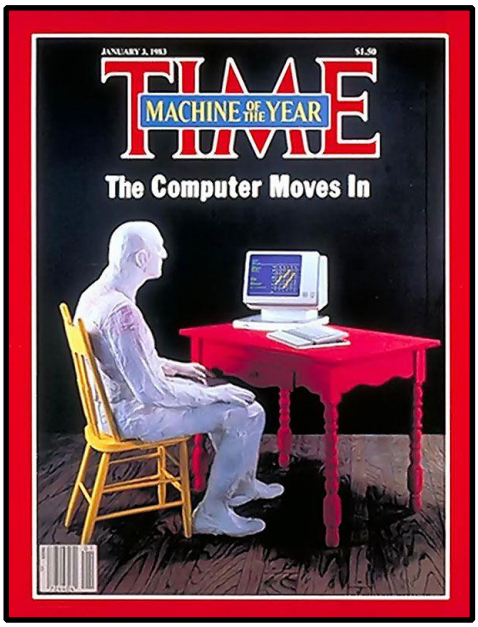
The lack of available hardware components needed for use as training aides became a problem. The procurement process to obtain them involved paperwork and months of delay. As a result, the training instructors would visit the manufacturing plant assembly lines anonymously, for something they called *pocket shopping* for the needed component parts.

The training session attendees occasionally asked theoretical questions regarding the specific technology used. These questions did not always have simple answers and usually involved the design engineers' particular understandings, the laws of physics, or design compromises made for manufacturing purposes. He developed a standard answer to these type of questions by telling his students a short story. "It seems that the sperm whale, the largest mammal on the face of the earth, has a throat about this big," he would say, as he formed his fingers into a circle about four inches in diameter. He continued, "You might ask why that is, but is just the way it is, and there is nothing you can do about it." Later when queried in this way, he would simply respond to these questions by forming his fingers into a circle. Enough said, the point made.

One of his training manuals won the Training Manual of the Year award from The American Society for Training and Development, or ASTD. Unknown to him, his boss had later added his own name to the application paperwork, and hung the resulting award plaque that now included *his* name first, on the wall in his office. Lefty received a framed reproduction photograph for his wall. Welcome to life in the corporate world, he thought.

They attended department meetings in the conference room where Bill Gates signed the historic deal to supply IBM with the Microsoft MS-DOS operating system for the personal computer line. He did see Bill or Trey as he was sometimes called, occasionally but only to say hello. Or to catchup on the stories behind Bills latest, and at the time frequent, speeding tickets. Driving fast for stress relief and rapid work to home to work turnaround times became a somewhat expensive proposition for Bill at the time. He later traded his speedy Porsche, for a slower Mercedes diesel engine car.

In 1982 TIME magazine altered its annual tradition of naming a "Man of the Year," choosing instead to name the personal computer its "Machine of the Year." In introducing the theme, TIME publisher John A. Meyers wrote, "Several human candidates might have represented 1982, but none symbolized the past year more richly, or will be viewed by history as more significant, than a machine: the computer." His magazine, he explained, has chronicled the change in public opinion with regard to computers. A senior writer contributed: "computers were once regarded as distant, ominous abstractions, like Big Brother. In 1982, they truly became personalized, brought down to scale, so that people could hold, prod and play with them." At TIME, the main writer on the project completed his work on a typewriter, but Meyers noted that the magazine's newsroom would upgrade to word processors within a year.



Later in the 1980s, IBM relocated its manufacturing operations to what became the IBM Research Triangle Park PC division in Raleigh. Lefty did not relish the idea of a return to North Carolina, with bad memories of Ft. Bragg still fresh, he decided to give up on IBM and the employment perks.

Lefty had recently heard about exciting things happening over in Houston, TX. For his next road trip, he bought a used 1971 Chevy Blazer, black with aluminum wheels, big tires, and then later installed a push bar on the front bumper. He front mounted the full size spare tire there to free up cargo space. Driving around town, his presence at four way stops was frequently acknowledged by other drivers waving him through first. The large spare tire apparently created an intimidation factor for the other motorists, which humored him some.

The Blazer

Back home for the holidays to visit friends and family, he met the woman who would become his second wife at a Round Robin party. His first wife had filed for divorce while he was serving his country in Korea. His old high school buddies and their friends would travel house to house on a holiday evening. They would sample various foods, beers, liquors, hemp, and music until the early morning hours. These events occurred well before impaired driving was viewed more seriously. He heard the Allman Brothers, Wishbone Ash, Heart, Led Zeppelin, REO, Thin Lizzy, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, local Wisconsin boy Steve Miller, and various other artists for the first time.

She was attending technical school and working in accounting. They did *make out* most of the night, and then he left for home to get back to school and work. She visited him a few times, and he her, over the next few years and in time they fell in love, and he proposed. She became the mother of his second daughter, in a marriage that would last for twenty-five years.

Having heard talk about a new cloned 100% IBM PC compatible portable computer, it caught his interest. Never shy about leaving one job for another, Lefty with his new wife headed off to Houston to check out Compaq Computer Company.

He again stopped to visit Box traveling through Choctaw, because as they say, "the road to a friend's house is never long." Box had bought a pipeline company, and was installing natural gas pipelines across Mississippi, and doing well at this.

In Houston, Lefty worked with the first portable personal computer system at Compaq. His job involved providing training to company and dealer technical people. The job also involved production of training materials, and manuals for troubleshooting and repairs these units. As a newly created position within the company, he worked directly for then president Rod Canion.

The Compaq portable (luggable) computer

The portable used a single half-height 5¼ inch, 360 kB diskette drive or dual diskette drives. This "luggable" suitcase-sized computer included a handle, and was the first version of an All-in-One[25] computer.

[25] *All-in-One desktop computers integrate the system's internal components into the same case as the display.*

The Xerox NoteTaker, a prototype computer developed at Xerox PARC, influenced its design. The 28 lb. Compaq Portable[26] folded up into a luggable case similar in size to a portable sewing machine. This computer held the same basic hardware as an IBM PC, only now inside a portable case. It also used Compaq's custom reverse engineered basic input and output system or BIOS, rather than IBM's, as was legally required.

Compaq went beyond the 64k, single-sided floppy and cassette-only models of the IBM PC and shipped these portables with 128k RAM and either one or two double-sided disk drives. The machine also used a unique hybrid display video of the text only IBM Monochrome Display Adapter or MDA, and Color Graphics Array or CGA, which supported color graphics. Both cards' text fonts were imbedded in the Read Only Memory or ROM. When using the internal amber monochrome monitor, it displayed a 9x14 font with an 8x8 font displaying with an external monitor connected. The user switched between internal and external monitors by pressing Ctrl+Alt->. When using a larger external monitor, this hardware also drove the original Compaq Deskpro desktop computer graphics. The user received the competitive advantage of both IBM video standards graphics capabilities, plus the additional high-resolution text.

The existing training book publishing technology at Compaq at the time, consisted of a dumb terminal system[27] requiring text to be typed into a mainframe, and required manual page layout. Soon enough however, he received a powerful 286 16 MHz computer with upgraded memory and hard disk drive, DOS version 3.3, and a Princeton grayscale monitor. Ideally suited for desktop publishing, the monitor allowed the use of both landscape and portrait modes by pivoting on its stand. A 386DX 2MB, 80 MB model was his next upgrade. Continuous upgrades of screen size, processor, memory, and hard disk, became necessary as the size, complexity, and number of the books he was creating continued to grow.

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[26] *This unit reminded him of an old joke about the ENIAC, the first electronic general-purpose computer that reportedly weighed 27 tons, filling an entire room. It was rumored that a portable version was available weighing only one-ton.*

[27] *A computer terminal that depends on a host computer for its processing power is called a dumb terminal.*

When computers filled rooms and required multiple people to run them

He used software like WordPerfect DOS for word processing, and Ventura Publisher[28], which ran under the GEM graphical environment, to create training documents which included graphics for his training sessions. He used various Bitstream, Adobe Postscript, and later TrueType fonts. Unlike today when computers can hold several hundred fonts in memory, in the early days the lack of computer memory capacity required that he use a type manager software to swap families of the fifty or so typeface varieties in and out of computer memory, dependent on the type of document he was working on.

He also used a NewGen Turbo PS/480 modified QMS laser printer. This printer used a souped-up hot rod Canon print engine, which printed 600 dots per inch, (dpi) high-resolution Postscript pages for proof reading when the standard HP, QMS, and Apple laser printers would only print 300 dpi at this time. Using these products, he would create documents that would previously have required professional typesetting. He sent final pages to print on a high quality Linotronic machine at 2540 dots per inch resolution, then to aluminum plate production, and finally to the offset printing press.

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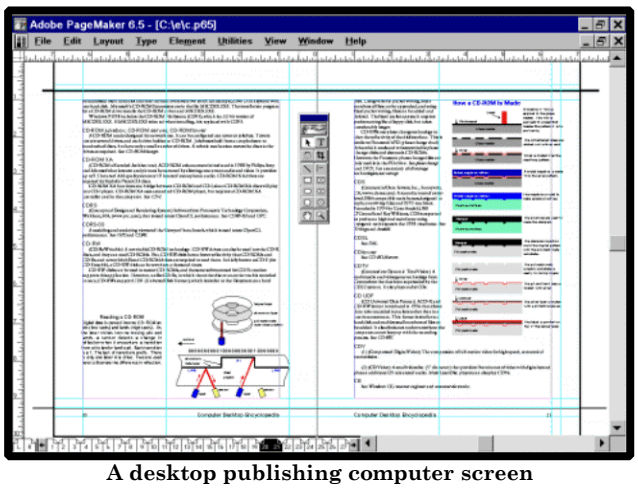
[28] *Ventura Publisher was a popular desktop publishing program for IBM PC compatibles. Text was stored in, loaded from, and saved back to, word processor files in their native formats. Paragraphs other than default body text were tagged with user-defined tag names. When working with these files outside of Ventura Publisher, these paragraph tags, special character, and attribute codes could be edited. These were similar to the html website tags now used.*

His prior high school experience of setting type hand for an impact printing press had advanced to machine typesetting or Linotype,[29] and then to electronic typesetting or Linotronic,[30] and finally to the personal computer for desktop publishing.

Hand setting type

Linotype machine

Linotronic machine



A desktop publishing computer screen

[29] *A Linotype machine used a 90-character keyboard creating an entire line of metal type at once, hence the name: "Line o' Type." This allowed faster typesetting and composition than the hand method of one letter, punctuation mark, or space at a time. This was used primarily by newspapers.*

[30] *A Linotronic image setter is a high-quality printer, capable of printing resolutions up to 2540 dots per inch. It allowed technical writers and graphic artists to inexpensively set type that exceeded the quality of many phototypesetting systems in use at the time.*

A graphic artist manually traced film photographic prints onto vellum paper for the assembly and disassembly graphics. Lefty would then scan them into the computer as .pcx files to place them into the electronic documents. Later, he scanned photographs directly as .tiff files, and placed them into the documents. Both methods were slow and time-consuming processes, motivating him to build a wheeled cart with mounted video camera, and lights. He would roll the cart down the production line capturing video of the assembly process. He would use video capture software and hardware to capture still frames for use as illustrations for the manuals. He clipped the RGB pin on the video camera cable to capture just the black and white info, to make the screen captures created as smaller digital files that the software could handle, while retaining the high quality greyscale images. He reversed the process order and removed some items to write the disassembly instructions. He won the Compaq Creativity Award for producing the first fully-digital manuals in the company's history.

Lefty traveled frequently to provide these trainings, and the Blazer's suspension, or lack thereof, had severely bruised his kidneys during the trip to Texas. He needed a replacement vehicle for this amount of traveling, and selected a nice year-old International Scout, rust colored with white Rallye stripes and chrome wheels. Equipped with air conditioning, cruise control, cloth seats, V8 engine, and cassette player, he thought he had hit the big time now. He financed the $5000 vehicle cost with an automatic payroll deduction. This was an excellent vehicle; except for the fact, neither he nor the dealer could ever make the automatic choke work right on the Carter AFB four-barrel carburetor. The engine would flood when started warm. Lefty eventually solved the problem by disabling the automatic choke, and installing a manual choke cable for cold engine starts.

The Scout

After a few years, finally tiring of the Texas heat that he likened to life on the surface of the sun, Lefty now shifted his gaze north. He heard that Digital Equipment (DEC) was finally coming to its senses and had started to initiate the development of a compatible PC as a replacement for their proprietary Rainbow. The VAXmate, an IBM PC/AT compatible personal computer, would replace the Rainbow and would include new software called Microsoft Windows as a second operating system layer. A VAX/VMS-based file and print server integrated the system into DEC's own DECnet-family. This provided local area network (internal) and wide area network (external) connections from the PC to mainframe or supermini computers.

He became especially intrigued with the idea of using the Gates and Allen created Windows graphical user interface software for the computer. He recently viewed a VHS video of a futuristic presentation of graphical user interface software, given by a fellow named Engelbart.

"The Mother of All Demos" name was given retrospectively to Douglas Engelbart's 1968 computer demonstration at the Association for Computing Machinery/Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (ACM/IEEE)—Computer Society's Fall Joint Computer Conference in San Francisco. The live demonstration featured the introduction of a complete computer hardware and software system called the oN-Line System or, NLS[31]. This 90-minute presentation demonstrated the most fundamental elements of a futuristic view of modern personal computing. It showcased moveable windows, hypertext, graphics, efficient navigation and command input, video conferencing, a computer mouse, word processing, dynamic file linking, revision control, and a collaborative real-time editor. Engelbart was the first to demonstrate all of these elements within a single system, to the public. This was not yet a personal computer, as the system was huge and expensive, but did show what might be possible someday.

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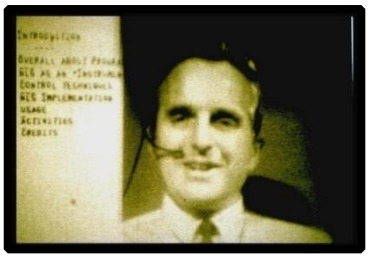
[31] *Engelbart's thoughts led to the development of his Augmentation Research Center (ARC), as well as the oN-Line System was derived from the "research culture" of World War II and the Cold War that followed.*

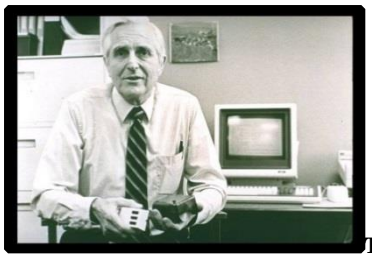
For ninety minutes, the stunned audience of around a thousand witnesses collaborative editing, videoconferencing, word processing, and a strange pointing device jokingly referred to as a "mouse." Every paragraph or other element in the NLS system could be linked to other elements using hypertext[32] links.

Douglas Engelbart practicing for his computer demonstration

At the same time across the country, visionary Ted Nelson is working with Andy van Dam to create another early hypertext system, called HES (Hypertext Editing System).



Mother of all demos



The and co-inventor of the mouse

[32] *Hypertext is text displayed on a computer display which references other text that the reader can immediately access. Hypertext documents are interconnected by hyperlinks, which are typically activated by a mouse click.*

The Scout packed up, and Fogerty's "Hundred and Ten in the Shade" appropriately playing from his cassette player, Lefty now headed north to DEC headquarters located inside a former wool mill[33] in Maynard, Massachusetts. Of course, he got a job offer to work with the VAXmate. This was what he did, and how he rolled. Finding a job providing the experience he sought, and with the next challenge and learning opportunity, well, he was just lucky that way.

The old Clock Tower Mill building

DEC was a major American computer company created in the 1960s, and would operate into the 1990s. The PDP and its successor the VAX became the most successfully sold minicomputers at the time.

The DEC Rainbow and the VAXmate computers

[33] *The Old Mill, renamed Clock Tower Place is now home to multiple companies, which in 1995 included a national nonprofit agency COMPUTER CORPS.*

The most popular early DEC microcomputer, the dual-processor (Z80-8088) Rainbow 100, ran the 8-bit CP/M operating system on the 4 MHz Z80 and the 16-bit CP/M-86 operating system[34] on the 4.81 MHz Intel 8088 processor. Rainbow could use a VT100 terminal mode[35], an 8-bit CP/M mode, and a CP/M-86 or MS-DOS mode using the 8088. It could also run a UNIX[36] System III implementation called VENIX. Application programs written for standard CP/M, required recompilation for the Rainbow. Except by this time, users expected custom-built (pre-compiled binary) applications such as the spreadsheet program Lotus 1-2-3. The Rainbow generated some press, but the high price and the lack of marketing and sales support prevented success. In 1983, IBM outsold DEC's personal computers by more than ten to one. Computer history tells the story:

> *The way in which the DEC standard RX50 floppy disk drive worked, summed up their approach to the personal computer market. Their mechanical drive hardware was nearly identical to other 5¼-inch floppy disk drives available on competing systems. DEC however sought to differentiate their product by using a proprietary disk format for the data written on the disk. The DEC format had a higher capacity for data, but the RX50 drives were incompatible with other PC floppy drives. This required DEC owners to buy higher-priced, hard to find, specially formatted floppy media. DEC enforced exclusive control over its floppy media sales by copyrighting this disk format. They also required a license agreement and royalty payments from anyone selling compatible media. Hardware hackers and DEC enthusiasts eventually reverse-engineered the RX50 format, but the damage had already been done.*

The VAXmate, the apparent savior for DEC and an opportunity to put this proprietary nonsense in its past, created a new hiring push and Lefty was hired on as to be a service representative. His job was traveling the Tristate area, working to assist dealers with service and parts problems, and resolving

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[34] *CP/M-86 was a version of the CP/M operating system that Digital Research (DR) made for the Intel 8086 and Intel 8088.*

[35] *A VT100 terminal is basically a typewriter that uses a video screen instead of paper and communicates via a serial connection with a mainframe or minicomputer.*

[36] *UNIX is a family of multitasking, multiuser computer operating systems that derive from the original AT&T UNIX.*

issues regarding corporate customers. He typically stayed at Holiday Inn motels, because they generally housed a heated pool and bar as well as live musical entertainment, however bad this usually was.

There Lefty worked for Ken Olson the founder, president, and chairman, with the support of a nice lady engineer named Renee who became his go-to gal for questions about the products.

During his time there, a small group of DEC employees took a mandatory two hundred mile bus trip south to visit the Bell Laboratories headquarters at Murray Hill, New Jersey.

Back in 1947, John Bardeen, Walter Brattain, and William Shockley (who subsequently shared a Nobel Prize for Physics in 1956) invented the transistor which was probably the most important invention ever developed at Bell Laboratories. This invention made the later personal computers possible.

While at MIT years ago before Ken formed his company DEC, he met the British born Cambridge University educated Dr. Ian Munro Ross. William Shockley recruited Ross, an early transistor pioneer, to work with semiconductors at the labs, and would later become the President of Bell Labs.

The 1970s saw more computer-related inventions at Bell Laboratories as part of the personal computing revolution. In 1972, Dennis Ritchie developed the compiled C programming language to replace interpretive B. He then used this to rewrite the UNIX operating system, also developed at Bell Laboratories by Ritchie and his co-worker Ken Thompson.

Olson disliked UNIX, and favored DEC's own VMS, but wanted us to look into what might be the future at the Labs, to stimulate ideas for potential DEC computer products.

They met A. Michael Noll, who worked on a tactile force-feedback system, coupled with interactive stereoscopic computer display. They saw fiber optics systems displayed, and saw a demo of the first single-chip 32-bit microprocessor, the BELLMAC-32A.

Researchers there also worked on the development of radio astronomy, the laser, the charge-coupled device (CCD), and information theory. Eventually Bell Laboratories received eight Nobel Prizes for the work completed there.

Bell Labs at Murray Hill

Back at DEC, they seemed serious enough about building personal computers, but a funny thing happened along the way to success. The sales failures of the VAX products cut the profit margins that supported company operations, including the VAXmate. This panicked Olson, who then reverted to his old ways. DEC was expected to usher in the age of personal computers, but Olson became skeptical of desktop machines, saying, "The personal computer will fall flat on its face in business." He came to regard them as *toys* used for playing video games.[37]

Lefty realized the prognosis yet again, and was about feed up with working inside the corporate world. He then pointed his Scout home to Wisconsin for the first time in nearly two decades.

Along the way back, he decided to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY and found this amazing place to be full of the history and the joys of his youth. He saw the artifacts on display of his hero Clemente, inducted to the hall on the first ballot unanimously upon his death, bypassing the usual five year waiting period. Among the treasures he discovered there, was the scorecard from Roberto Clemente's 3000th hit game. Fittingly, it was a standup double into the left centerfield gap.[38]

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[37] *DEC was acquired in 1998 by Compaq, and then subsequently merged with Hewlett-Packard.*

[38] *Clemente thought he had hit #3000 on September 29, 1972, with an infield hit. However, the official scorer later ruled it an error. Clemente's historic hit came the next day as he sparked a fourth inning Pirate rally with a double. He joined a list of only 30 or so baseball players to ever accomplish this goal. It was Clemente's final at bat of the season and, tragically, the last of his career—the Puerto Rican hero would perish in an airplane accident during the off-season.*

Lefty also stopped at Huntington Rural Cemetery, at Huntington, New York, to visit the grave of singer, songwriter, and world hunger humanitarian, Harry Chapin, who gave half of his earnings to fight world hunger.[39] He proclaimed that his belief was one was for me and one for the other guy.

Earlier back on the Palo Alto campus, he enjoyed his concert music on several occasions. His story songs and the energy he projected into them were remarkable, Lefty thought. Harry later died in a traffic accident near New York City. Standing there at the gravesite, he recalled some of the lyrics to "What Made America Famous," one of his favorite Chapin tunes.

I went to sleep with the hope that made America famous.
I had the kind of a dream that maybe they're still trying to teach in school.
Of the America that made America famous—and
Of the people who just might understand
That how together yes we can
Create a country better than
The one we have made of this land,
We have a choice to make each man
Who dares to dream, reaching out his hand
A prophet or just a crazy goddamn
Dreamer of a fool - yes a crazy fool
There's something burning somewhere.
Does anybody care?
Is anybody there?

[39] *At a later memorial concert for Harry, singer/songwriter Bruce Springsteen told a story about Harry talking his ear off frequently about this subject, with Bruce having to admit that he himself was just not generous enough to give up half his earnings.*

Lefty began work on his BS in Education with a minor in Technical Writing, attending classes in the evenings while working at Xerox in California. He continued using his GI Bill[40] education benefits and a VA tuition scholarship while working at IBM in Boca. He thought these classes would help him to produce the training manuals, and they were indeed a valuable resource to test the clarity in his writing.

Beyond his work experiences, he also upgraded and built his own computers at home for some time now. He replaced the motherboard in his original mail-order 8-10 MHz switchable 286 desktop computer, with one having a NEAT-D chipset. The NEAT chipset contained a feature that remapped the upper 384kb of physical RAM for software use, which IBM had originally designated for hardware use only. This chipset allowed loading hardware device drivers as well as terminate and stay resident (TSR) programs into that memory space. The result was more memory available to run the newest, most memory intensive software programs with the faster 20 MHz CPU chip.

He built his first 386-processor tower computer in the same manner that he built his first car engine as a teenager, buying the parts as his money allowed. First, he bought the steel tower case, then later the power supply. He would plug it in, fire it up and it would not do anything but lite the digital LED display, but that in itself was cool. Later he bought the motherboard, CPU and memory, and then a hard disk. His computer would now work at 33 MHz speed rather than the 8 or 10 MHz switchable of his original 286. On that machine, 10 MHz was turbo mode, and he needed to downshift to 8 MHz play games like Frogger or everything would move too fast to play effectively.

He never imagined Moore's Law[41] would take these chip speeds to 4200 MHz, (4.2 GHz), over the next thirty or so years.

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[40] *The G.I. Bill, was a law that provided benefits for returning veterans starting with World War II extending to the Vietnam War era. Benefits included low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, cash payments for tuition and living expenses to attend high school, college, or vocational/technical school.*

[41] *Moore's law is the observation of Intel engineer Gordon Moore that the number of transistors inside an integrated circuit doubles approximately every two years, thus doubling the speed of the processor chip.*

Lefty finally tired of the limitations of DOS and single tasking and bought a copy of IBM's OS/2, which allowed multitasking, or running multiple programs simultaneously. The way this worked with the current DOS programs, he needed to close each program before launching another one. This process was unproductive and made copy and paste between programs impossible. He bought what was at the time a giant 300 megabyte SCSI[42] hard disk for $1000, to supplement his 80-megabyte MFM drive, only to discover OS/2 then did not yet boot on SCSI drives. He later made it work, but dumped the poor performing and proprietary OS/2, for Microsoft's more open Windows 3.0 around 1990. Little did he know then, the path this interest in computers would continue to take him down, to eventually create and run two computer businesses.

At around this time, Lefty was contacted, through his parents, by one of his grade school buddies regarding a twenty-five year class reunion. Gerry explained that he was running his dad's business now, performing in a musical band, and had spent many years trying to write the next great American novel. He also said that he had only one major regret in his life, and that was not serving his country in the military due to his college student deferments. Lefty told him that despite any books he might have read or movies he had seen, to put aside any romantic notions of what that would have been like, and not to worry about it.

We talked about old times, and Lefty quoted him a remembered Beatles lyric, "You and I have memories, longer than the road that stretches out ahead, " and we promised to stay in touch.

After the call as Lefty sat at his desk stroking his chin whiskers looking off into the distance thinking, and his memory of his forgotten days in the Army came rushing back to him.

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[42] *Small Computer System Interface (SCSI) is a set of standards for physically connecting and transferring data between computers and peripheral devices.*

Chapter Two, Expendable

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At the age of twenty years plus a day, Lefty left his wife and baby girl, for a seat on the 6 am bus leaving the county courthouse headed to Missouri for Army Basic Training. Nixon apparently needed him so badly for the butchery in Vietnam that they needed to pull him away from family and friends, cut off his hair, and dressed him in funny green suit and shiny black boots. No doubt, he made an ill-advised, traditional, yet immature choice of his first wife based on her pregnancy. He met her that summer at a stock car race, where he hung out most Saturday nights. They dated senior year of high school and married when she started showing. Not much of a husband probably, he was still a kid in love with cars and music, but he genuinely loved his baby daughter. He would care for her and feed her bottles while watching Johnny Carson late at night, while her mother enjoyed herself with the stray men at the local bars. He never got a chance to grow into his parental responsibilities, now snatched away by Uncle Sam's war machine before her first birthday.

He had registered for the draft at age 18, and was labeled 1-A following the Army physical. No 3-A or 4-F[43], classification for him due to his family or his genetic asthma, but he now knew his future, and it temporarily paralyzed his will.

According to his Wisconsin driver's license at 5'11, 160 lbs., brown and brown, Lefty was of average build, average strength, and of average intelligence, or so he thought. He accepted the handed down blame on himself for his poor performance in school. This, despite his uninspiring teachers, ineffective guidance, or lack of a compelling or even relevant curriculum. He did know that he possessed a better memory, hearing, and eyesight compared to his peers.

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[43] *There were 20 plus draft classification numbers including, 1-A Available for unrestricted military service, 3-A Hardship deferment; deferred from military service because service would cause hardship upon their families, and 4-F where the registrant was not physically acceptable for military service.*

He was self-aware of being driven, perhaps to a fault, by his interests however, and soon recognized that compared to his peers that this was not *average*. He had a bent for things mechanical; with a tunnel vision *do it at all costs* approach to following his interests, whatever they were. He also noticed the tendency for people to look to him, not necessarily for advice, but for his *make it work* ethic in accomplishing tasks.

He also nurtured a great love of music, and a self-recognized understanding and personal demonstration of his complete absence of any performance talent in this area.

He tended to see things others did not, and with his fondness for satire, he could be easily confused for a smart-ass.

His public high school education left him mostly unprepared for the larger world surrounding him and absent any real world marketable work skills. He was placed within the general academic track by his high school counselors, based primarily on his parental working class status. This then by default rendered him intellectually and emotionally unprepared for further education.

He would soon confront his own mortality at a young age, receiving an A-1 classification from the local draft board. Despite the asthma inherited from his great grandfather, he now was given the promise of active duty call up within months. This realization left him unmotivated, and absent family, he struggled living independently and kicked around working short-lived jobs at car dealerships, auto repair shops, as well as tire stores. He used his self-taught skills to survive. He was a transient in his own town, living at boarding houses and working minimum wage jobs.

Born of the Vietnam War generation, his unlucky number "19" matching his age, was pulled out of the war machine's Selective Service lotto[44] drum by his elders. This one-way ticket came via postal mail, with a "Greetings" letter from a previously unknown uncle named Sam. Yet for a freak of calendar, the outrage of a nation's youth, and the act of a too-late-smart Congress, he barely dodged being just more cannon fodder for this unwarranted, stupid, and senseless southeast Asian war

[44] *This dubious lottery selected an outsized number of the poor and minorities, plus those unable or unwilling to obtain various deferments or classifications.*

which in the end claimed nearly 60,000 young men of his generation. With more than 150,000 mentally and physically wounded, he believed he was now owed his life and good health, to those who protested this immoral injustice and demand an end to this insanity. These included Tom Hayden and SDS, returned veterans groups, Daniel Ellsberg, some brave college students, and particularly those shot and killed at Kent State.

Two prime years of his life wasted with meaningless training activities in preparation for more meaningless construction work in upgrading foreign military bases. He became yet another cog in a wheel supporting the colonizing of southeast Asia, and to him the equivalent of an involuntary twentieth century government assigned working class post-secondary indoctrination. He would not run off to Canada, shoot himself in the foot, feed himself fat, starve himself skinny, or mutilate an extremity by freezing and chopping off part of a big toe. He would not pretend to be mentally ill or intellectually deficient, like some did. He was not raised that way. He would not emigrate to avoid conscription like his Great Grandfather had . It wasn't until much later in life that he would come to acknowledge the bravery of that act. He was who he was, and who he had grown to become. He could not allow someone else to take his place to die in the distant jungle. He knew that he could not live with that guilt. He would instead accept his fate, determined by the fall of a lottery ball and the random date of his birth.[45]

Army Basic training consisted of calisthenics and obstacle courses, interspersed with physically and mentally demeaning treatment, repetitively called turds, knuckleheads, and shit-for-brains. The sergeants took pleasure in continuously reminding them that they, like their closest relatives whale shit, were so low that they resided at the bottom of the ocean. Instructed to write home and tell mom to sell the outhouse, because their asses now belonged to the Army.[46]

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[45] *Lefty would rise in rank twice, based on time in grade without any specific merit, and despite some minor disciplines.*

[46] *Sergeant Hulka: Men, welcome to the United States Army. I'm Sergeant Hulka. I'm your drill sergeant. Before we proceed any further, we gotta get something straight. Your mamas are not here to take care of you now. It's just you, me, and Uncle Sam. And before I leave you, you're gonna find out that me and Uncle Sam are one in the same.* From the movie Stripes.

They were also told that *Backdoor Jody* was sleeping with their girlfriends and wives.[47]

At the mess hall for chow three times each day, while standing the line they were required to bark out their serial numbers followed with RA for regular army, US for draftees, AR for Army Reserves, and NG for the National Guard. It was a point of pride for Lefty to bark out his US, as he was one of the few remaining conscripts and was disgusted with his whole experience.

The physically demeaning treatment took the form of a dozen guys marched into a gas chamber, only to have their gas masks ripped off by a sergeant for them to experience the full effect of the tear gas. Drill sergeants sitting outside under shade trees sipping cold soft drinks, would laugh heartily as they ran out, tears streaming, coughing, and puking. Or being awakened mornings to bright lights and sergeants banging the lids on metal trashcans, to their early morning serenade of "*drop your cocks and grab your socks*."

When they marched or ran in formation, they were required to sing responses to marching cadences, known colloquially as Jody calls. Singing made it harder to march or run and perhaps served as entertainment for the drill sergeants. Later versions replaced the many expletive-ridden cadences from the politically incorrect 70s, perhaps as an adaptation to the ways of the *new* volunteer Army.

A yellow bird
With a yellow bill
Sat up upon
My windowsill
I lured him in
With a piece of bread
And then I smashed
His fucking head

[47] *The name "Jody" refers to a recurring civilian character, the soldier's nemesis, who stays home to a perceived life of luxury. Jody drives the soldier's car, dates the soldier's girlfriend, or lives with his wife, hangs out with the soldier's friends, and eats his mom's great cooking.*

Trained to call their rifles weapons, as they ran or marched, they chanted, "*This is my weapon, and this is my gun. This one is for fighting, and this one is for fun,"* while alternately raising their rifles and grabbing their crotches.

Those falling behind on these forced marches were required to run around the outside of the marching group holding their weapon over their head. Forced to continue until they dropped of exhaustion, they were then loaded onto a trailing truck. Despite his asthma, Lefty barely met these requirements.

Having been a ballplayer, Lefty was substantially fit going in, but came out in the best shape of his life physically. He had once fainted due to heat stroke on a particular hot day of calisthenics in the sun. Taken to an air-conditioned hospital, he was required to drink some nasty salt water for a few hours. At least it was cold and clean. The typical water source available to them in Basic training was warm to hot salt water from a lister bag[48] with spigots on the bottom, hanging in the sun. The taste of this water closely resembled what warm urine must taste like he thought. Filling your canteen at the fresh water fountain in the barracks in the mornings was actively discouraged, of course.

Mentally however, he was confused and dismayed as the Vietnam veteran drill sergeants bragged of blowing up gooks heads like watermelons, thereby ruining their whole day. He trained himself to avoid absorbing any of this nonsense deflecting, and laughing off being called demeaning names each day. "Good Morning Shitheads!"

One time one of these so-called *knuckleheads* was late in line for morning formation and when confronted in front of the whole platoon by the drill sergeant, sheepishly explained he was in the latrine having a bowel movement. The sergeant barked out he did not care what his excuse was, take a scissors and cut if off if need be. There was simply no excuse for not being on time for the formation.

Another so-called *turd* was somewhat weak, uncoordinated, and a bit goofy. The drill sergeants relentlessly harassed and cajoled him throughout Basic Training, threatening him with

[48] *A Lister bag is a canvas bag with faucets, similar in size to a duffel bag, and is used for supplying troops in the field with water.*

recycling.[49] They apparently thought he was just a goof and not trying hard enough. They remained especially hard on him at the rifle range. He did not graduate with our class and we caught a glimpse of him as we departed; now however wearing eyeglasses. Lefty hoped for his sake, he would make it through the second time around.

He wrote a letter to his older brother while in Basic Training.

> *Dear Brother, I thought you might want to know some of what you have missed with your student deferments, so I will relay this story to you.*
>
> *So there we were, brand new recruits on the military base for Basic Training. The time eventually came for night firing at the rifle range, but first we were herded into a darkened auditorium and given instruction on how to fire at the targets in the dark of night. One key point that was stressed, was to get your eyes adjusted to the dark called gaining night vision, hence us being in the darkened room. They told us there was a small red flashing light on the human silhouette target, which would blink at ten second intervals. Another key point stressed was that only every fifth bullet, in a twenty round clip, was a tracer round which showed the path the bullet traveled. "If you can't tell where your rounds are hitting, instructed the training sergeant, aim low and you will see the dust fly up from in the dirt berm in front of the targets." There was great*

[49] *Recycling was a term that meant being forced to repeat Basic training. This was a motivating factor for many, including Lefty, as this was the last thing anyone would wish to experience more than once.*

importance stressed to have a good showing here, as the hits would be electronically scored. If you did a bad job they would need to repeat Basic Training, which they called being recycled. We all thought this wouldn't be that difficult, and might even be some fun. After receiving the training, we assembled outside to wait to march over to the rifle range. Hurry up and wait as usual, we all lit up cigarettes to kill time as we waited for them to get their act together. Meanwhile a sergeant came over yelling at us about having ruined our recently achieved and most valuable night vision, by lighting cigarettes. We wasted his time for nothing, and rant and rave, and so on and so forth. Oops! This motivation now behind us, we marched to the range and lined up in the prone position in front of the targets as usual. The officer would call "ready on the right" and the sergeant would answer "ready." Then another officer would then call "ready on the left" and the sergeant would answer "ready" and then the head officer would say FIRE! Everyone let loose their rounds hopefully aimed at the human silhouette targets, with the small occasionally flashing red light. What then occurred is that apparently most everyone couldn't see anything, so they aimed low and the resulting cloud of dust over the targets resembled what the dust bowl storms of Oklahoma must have looked like. The electronic scoring later revealed that the group in fact made little contact with the human silhouette targets. On hearing this, we originally thought it to be funny as hell,

but as with most experiences in Basic Training, our attitudes were about to be adjusted. We were ordered off the firing line and herded into bleachers, which resembled a baseball grandstand. The officer then proceeded to tell us what a bunch of low life's we were, the worst seen in all his years, and an embarrassment to our entire genealogical line; past, present, and future, as well as our actions having dishonored God and Country. We were also assured, just as threatened when back in high school; this bad behavior would in fact be stamped indelibly on our permanent records. In the end, we all received Marksmanship medals, but the Army perhaps reevaluated the process after this event, because we never did go to "night fire" ever again.

Following Basic Training, it was Advanced Individual Training (AIT) for me. This program included electrician training in such things as hand setting power poles, pole climbing, basic exterior and interior wiring, as well as generator operation. They would learn whatever they could, in six weeks.

His instructor sergeant made himself famous on base climbing a 60-foot pole for each class, placing the six-inch top of the pole in his stomach doing a spread eagle showing no fear. A macho yet stupid thing, Lefty thought. Nevertheless, he learned to climb poles correctly with his foot-mounted gaffs and waist belt did not fall. As with most things he worried about, they never happened anyway.

Taught that if you are going to fall, do not hug the pole, but push off to fall free to the ground instead, he doubted this advice. He saw this lesson first hand when one of his classmates fell, hugged the pole, and slid down the pole driving a 12-inch wood sliver under the skin of his inner forearm. The injured panicking trainee ran over to the sergeant for assistance as everyone watched. The sergeant quickly distracted him by yelling at some

other grunts and then ripping out the sliver before the poor guy knew what happened. The rest of the training consisted of the basic wiring of interior switches and receptacles, and a few lessons operating a small 5kw gasoline engine generator.

He made friends including a good guy named Croteau, a French Canadian from New Hampshire, which he pronounced Nau *Hamcha.*

They passed time in the evenings lying in their bunks before lights out, listening to LP's of Cheech and Chong classic skits like "Dave's not here man," "El Monte Slim," Sister Mary Elephant, and "Basketball Jones." They would laugh their asses off, and this served as a great stress release at the end of their long days.

On weekends, they could explore the local town. He visited his first ever strip club and remembers the good-looking topless dancer lip-syncing Pink Floyd's Money, checking him out as he walked in.

Offered the chance to stay behind at AIT as an instructor he declined, reflecting his non-volunteering attitude.[50] His refusal to comply caused him to be sent the colonel who insisted on the offer, but Lefty was imbedded with a don't give-a-shit draftee attitude, and again declined the offer. After all, what are they going to do? Take him away from home and family, cut his hair off, and put him in a goofy OD green suit with funny black boots? Oh wait, they already did that Lefty knew. He then questioned the colonel as to where he would go if he did not accept this offer, and perhaps to scare him, he said Fort Benning Ga., to which Lefty replied I've been here, but ain't never been there. In the end, it did not matter, as a few days before graduation the whole company received orders for duty in South Korea.

By the time he was done with training, Congress had shut off the money tap for Vietnam, but the Army had all these draftees ready to go, that Lefty thought that they didn't know what to do with. They could have assigned us to the Army Reserve, or National Guard, or they could have just sent them

[50] *Lefty had already been "got" once in basic when the sergeant requested volunteer equipment operators. Lefty had experience driving trucks, tractors and various other farm and industrial equipment. In this case, the sergeant presented the volunteer equipment operators with a shovel. He called it a model M1-A, and pointed out that it was both hand operated and air-cooled. Once bitten, twice shy.*

home. But they didn't, and instead sent a lot of us to maintain existing operations in Korea and also in Germany.

Shortly after Lefty reported for Army duty the previous summer, his wife decided that she did not wish to be an Army wife, and moved in with one of her boyfriends. She sent him divorce papers a few months later while he served overseas, claiming *cruel and unusual punishment* as grounds. He refused to sign until back home, but did in time sign under different terms. He also later gave his approval for them to adopt his daughter. Coming from a large family, he thought it best for her to grow up some family stability. As a nomad he knew he could not offer this to her, but he preferred she grow up with siblings and two full time parents. Only later did he learn how dysfunctional this family was. Sometimes you are too soon old, and too late smart, he realized.

In Korea, he spent his first few weeks in an arrival and departure center before shipping off to his new unit. While there, the new arrivals received a lecture from the commanding officer who talked about how, on average everyone in the room would get VD once during their tour, and some twice because *he* himself was not going to get it. This departure area "holding pen" was absent things to entertain them, and bred boredom as they weren't' allowed to be off base. He read some library books, shot pool, and snuck off base to the bars a few times during the 30 day stay. He finally received his transit orders late one day.

Driven by truck to his new Army home, arriving in the late evening at Camp Mercer[51] when most everyone was asleep. The guy on night duty, a comical little Hispanic guy named Flores, was nice enough to offer him his bunk until he had a chance to settle in the next day. He slept across from a guy, chained to his own bunk and detained under house arrest for selling Post Exchange goods off base to the locals. There was a big demand for this and money to be made, but also severe penalties for being caught. This *detainee* played Neil Young's Harvest album and he heard "A Man Needs a Maid" for the first time. Having severely twisted his ankle a few weeks earlier Lefty was taking serious

[51] *A former American soldier claimed that the U.S. military buried hundreds of gallons of chemicals at Camp Mercer in the 1960s and 70s. Nixon strikes again.*

pain meds, making him loopy, which kept him inside the barracks and off regular duty for a while.

His time in Korea consisted mostly of Temporary Duty Deployments or TDD, doing off-base construction work at missile sites. They worked rebuilding security dog kennels, created erosion control projects, and built the concrete lincoln logs for the later purpose. Of course being the Army, they loaded these lincoln logs manually onto a lowboy semitrailer down in the motor pool. Lefty pointed out the Sarge, that within their view was a forklift. The Sarge explained that the forklift did not belong to them and they could not borrow it for this job, which puzzled Lefty because its color was an exact match for his funny green suit. Lefty injured his back doing this job, and this would bother but not disable him, for the rest of his life.

Part way through his one year tour, the whole company was moved south to another base called Camp Humphreys. Camp Mercer was turned over to the South Korean KATUSA's.[52] Back on base at Camp Humphreys[53], he also saw Korean soldiers in training to kill their cousins in the north over political differences, as well as the general societal decay of the US led then twenty-plus year military colonization. The local city buses used tires with non-directional treads stamped *for military use only* on the sidewalls, and the local shops full of black market American goods apparently stolen off the unloading ships in the Incheon harbor. He did attend a wonderful Bob Hope USO show late into his tour. Lefty never cared for his politics, but Hope performed a great service to many homesick GI's, over many decades with his shows.

Music became important because of the homesickness and the proximity to Japan, where most of the audio equipment originated in those days. One result was the availability of high quality stereo and quad music systems at good prices in the Post Exchange Store called the PX.

In this environment without many places to spend your Army money, Lefty saved most of his in savings bonds. He did

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[52] *Korean Augmentation To the United States Army (KATUSA) Is a branch of the Republic of Korea Army that consists of Korean drafted personnel who are augmented to the Eighth United States Army (EUSA).*

[53] *Named for Chief Warrant Officer Humphreys, who had died in a helicopter accident.*

buy a modest stereo system, which he later shipped home and then loaned to his Irish twin brother while he was in graduate school at the time, while he left for his last five months of service at Ft. Bragg.

He heard the music of Elton John and Carlos Santana in Basic. He heard Rod Stewart and Faces, Cheech and Chong and Curtis Mayfield in AIT. He heard Joe Walsh, Mott the Hoople, Carole King, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, and Savoy Brown for the first time in Korea. Guys thrown together from around the country and a long way away from home, led to many cultural and music discoveries. Puerto Rican trainees would sit around on weekends drinking 100 proof rum out of water tumblers, and teach everyone swear words in Spanish. In the Army, you got peer labeled as either a juicer (boozer) or a head (pot smoker).

In the Korean nightclubs, the hookers sat around a stove for heat in the winter, and GI's would walk in and select one to their liking, who would then walk them to her paper-lined hut and screw them short time or long time. Maybe she would try to steal their wallets, or maybe not.

The Army in its wisdom helped direct them to the correct club for them to frequent providing a large billboard sign at the base exit listing the names of the clubs, with the tally of VD cases reported at each over the past month. According to common lore, if you did go on *sick call* with that problem, the doc would ask which club you recently visited, bringing out a photo album for identification of the girl involved. Later the MP's would visit her, bring her back to base and the doc would pump a shot of penicillin in her ass, and the MP's would deliver her back home, he later learned.

The village, built up tight to the base gate, required you to step through the muddy streets, where urine ran through the open gutters and open defecation was common. He tried hard to rationalize that while these people live in filth and in paper huts, they only needed us to teach them how to kill their cousins.

Some guys maintained girlfriends called yobo's, who they kept in the village and slept off base. Korean cooking of food was done in an open area over a round charcoal brick in a pit, and ducted to provide radiant floor heating for the wood and paper constructed huts. Some GI's died, poisoned by the leaking heating systems; others woke to severe headaches during the

night and knew enough to suspect carbon monoxide poisoning. These experiences ended up being the germination of a seed that later led him to join Peace Corps and travel to West Africa to try to help. He also needed to clear his conscience from Nixon forcing him into being another classic ugly American GI abroad.

A tour of Korea, a classified "hardship tour," disallowed families from joining. His tour of duty required 12 months, and 29 days of service with no rest and relaxation or R&R. The week of his 21st birthday, he took a leave accompanied by a Korean friend, and rode a civilian bus south to the furthermost point in the country. From the ocean beach in Pusan, he was as far away from the base as was possible. He did not speak the language or particularly enjoy the local food, but he needed to be far away from the Army for a while. He needed to celebrate this personal milestone, reflect on his life to this point, and prepare himself for his final six months.

While out on TDD, his crew worked building a concrete ditch down the mountain road from the helipad to keep the road from washing out during the annual monsoon rains. Near the infamous Incheon harbor, this particular missile site presented a spectacular view of the East China Sea. Of course, the Army way was digging this ditch during the winter, using a jackhammer and pickaxes to remove the frozen dirt. They rode to the job site on wood benches in the back of a dump truck covered with a wood framed canvas top. Working in what felt similar to a prison chain gang, and Lefty frequently dreamed about stowing away on a merchant ship down in the harbor, to find his way back home to civilization and freedom. Later on, they would fly to job sites on Chinook helicopters. He thought them to be scary, loud, and cold. The pilot would leave the rear entry ramp open to make the experience less claustrophobic, and give them a view of the countryside.

In the early spring, they poured the concrete for the ditch. This work reflected a classic Army four-part FUBAR[54] operation. The cement mixer sat on a lowboy semi-trailer, with piles of sand, gravel, and bags of cement stacked alongside. Then the

[54] *FUBAR is a military acronym for "fucked up beyond all/any recognition/ repair/ reason/ redemption."*

draftees[55] and volunteers [56] would shovel the sand and gravel up over their heads into the mixer to pass the 40 lb. bags of the cement to someone up top, who would pour in the powder. With the concrete mix made, a dump truck pulled up alongside the mixer and the batch dumped in. The truck would then back up the mountain road and dump the load onto the road surface where the prisoners, err soldiers, would shovel the mix into the wooden forms built by the local Korean workers. A trailer mounted air compressor would run the vibrator, which was then plunged into the forms to remove any air pockets from the mix.

This air compressor was hard to start in the cold thin mountain air atop this mountain. The Army in its wisdom did not provide ether starter spray, with good reason perhaps. They would instead use a stick, wrapped with a rag soaked in diesel fuel, lit on fire, and held under the air intake of the compressor's naturally aspirated diesel engine. Cranking the engine over, while allowing it to suck in the flames, nearly always made the engine start. Giving draftees a can of ether starting spray in this environment would possibly ensure they would blow the heads off the engine using the "if some is good, more is better and too much is just enough" logical theory.

On this site, the temperature would fall below freezing at night, and the Sarge did not want the newly poured concrete to freeze before cured, which would weaken it. Someone needed to cover the forms with tarps and connect the hoses to a Herman Nelson heater underneath the tarps. Liking the idea of having the next day off, Lefty frequently agreed to this duty, despite his nervousness due to the gasoline fuel tanks of these heaters being mounted directly over the burner. Lefty would stay up all night talking with the guards in the guard shack and would refuel the heater after it shut off, being sensible enough to allow a cool down period first.

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[55] *Lefty rejected a sergeant's offer during basic training, to sign up for an additional year and select his choice of Military Occupational Specialty or MOS. He recalls his response being something about he may have been born at night, but not last night.*

[56] *Many volunteers who joined to avoid being drafted, worked on the same crew, just for a year longer. They typically did not enjoy this being pointed out to them. After all, they had been promised they would "Be All They Could Be" and selected the MOS they wanted; but alas they were lied to. Nixon strikes again!*

These guards are just nuts he thought, talking about killing border crossers. These guys held the 11 Bravo or infantry MOS and were way too high strung for comfort, he thought. Close enough to hear gunfire from the DMZ[57] area, in those days Korea frequently operated under martial law[58]. United Nations Peacekeeping Force my ass he thought, these places have missiles for a reason. Rumor had it that the red tipped ones were the nukes.

Out on another TDD job, they covered a helipad area using a heavy rubber mat held down with giant thumbtacks built from three quarter inch rebar rods and six-inch diameter flat diamond plate heads welded together. The first attempted landing of a double blade Chinook helicopter, blew the whole mess down the mountainside, and was recovered by the villagers and then disappeared. Their group returned to the site later, spread cement powder over the helipad area, tilled in with a rototiller, and then wetted it down. This "soil stabilization" was the Army's Plan B.

At another location, they rebuilt a security dog kennel by installing and wiring some security lights, creating a gravity fed water supply system, and building a fence around the kennel. The missile sites had a double fence enclosure and the Military Police or MP's, ran the dogs between the fences at night to discourage intruders, known as *slicky boys*, or thieves. As an Army trained electrician,[59] there was not much work for him and he did whatever ordered to do. For the most part, he and his buddies helped to reduce the apparent excess inventory of canned beer in-country.

Local Korean contractors worked on many of these projects as well as Korean soldiers (KATUSA). They of course used the

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[57] *A demilitarized zone, or DMZ is an area in which treaties or agreements between nations, military powers or contending groups forbid military installations, activities or personnel.*

[58] *Martial law is the imposition of the military as the head of the government.*

[59] *The day they gave the aptitude tests to assign each of them an Military Occupational Specialty or MOS in Basic, it was excessively hot inside the building, Lefty about to pass out, just filled in any old answers on the test just to get outside for some air. If these tests were done right, he would probably have been sent to Office Candidate School OCS, and likely died as a second lieutenant in Nam. In the end, he believed that it worked out for the best.*

newer Vietnam era equipment, while the poor American GI slobs used the Korean War surplus equipment. One of those contractors was welding chain link fencing to posts one day, when the GI's noticed one of their five-quarter trucks would not start. The guy with the welder decided he would jump-start the vehicle using the welder. At a distance while driving past, Lefty was yelling NOOOOO! out of the window of his truck, as the Korean touched the welder's cables to the battery posts, created a spark, ignited the battery gas, and blew the caps and probably some acid up into the air. He did not stick around for the resulting fallout, but a lesson was apparently learned that day, the hard way.

One advantage of off-base temporary duty was that they reported to a sergeant, with no officer's onsite. This was a more relaxed environment being off-base and absent the constant verbal harassments and harping of get a haircut, polish those boots, button that pocket, or tuck in that shirt.

Later during his tour in Korea, after his unit had moved to a larger camp near the center of the country, they were housed in a modern volunteer army or MVA barracks. The barracks was now a concrete-block dorm-type building and each individual room contained four bunks, wardrobe lockers, and a desk under the window and a lamp, not to mention a throw rug on the floor. This new modern volunteer army was *quite the deal* he thought, not. You still showered with a dozen of your buddies, but the days of the old wooden barracks bunk, footlocker, bunk, footlocker, as far as the eye could see was now in the past. Living in the barracks during the evenings you typically could not see to the end of the hallway, for the cloud of pot smoke. The most egregious potheads would have their room door removed, at least for a time.

At one point due some Middle East turmoil, they went on full alert. Ordered to form up, march to the armory, and draw weapons with no ammo, and then sit in the barracks in the dark for several hours until the crisis passed.

They put up a poster they purchased out in the village on the wall of their room.

I Want to go Home - Korea

I AM DRUNK, SICK. PISSED OFF, STUPID, AND HUNGRY. I HAVE A HANGOVER, FLATBROKE, NEED A HAIRCUT, TIRED, AND NO MAIL. I MISSED BEDCHECK, NO PUSSY, NO FRIENDS, AND DAMNED FEW RELATIVES.

I AM IN DEBT, POOR CHARACTER RATING, AND AM OVERTIME IN GRADE.

MY LAUNDRY WAS REJECTED, I MISSED CHOW, AND MY LEAVE WAS DISAPPROVED.

I LOST MY SHOT RECORD, HAVE NO BUTTS TO SMOKE, CAN'T SHAVE, GOT A DR FOR 3 DAYS AWOL, AND THE 1ST SGT WANTS TO SEE ME AFTER THIS FORMATION.

I GOT A HARD ON, GOT VD, ABOUT TO SHIT MY PANTS AND THE LATRINE IS OFF LIMITS UNTIL AFTER THE INSPECTION, AND THEN SOME SON-OF-A-BITCH SAYS, "RE-ENLIST FOR THE BENEFITS"!

Lefty met a baby-faced youngster from Pennsylvania known as The Kid. It was his first time away from home and Lefty's platoon members reveled when he lost his cherry, and continued to be otherwise morally corrupted by the members of his unit. With all the drinking, whoring and swearing, his own mother may not be able to recognize him when back home, Lefty thought.

At one point, a mechanic joined the unit named SP4 Schneider who did a tour of Vietnam prior to Korea. He would regale us with stories from when he was in Nam as a tank mechanic, and drove a Contact tool truck. As Nam is primarily jungle, the tanks did not get much use. His main job turned out to be going around the country to these tanks and welding the water drain holes shut in the bottom of the ammo boxes. These boxes were bolted onto the tanks, and designed to hold machine gun ammunition. The tank crews however wanted to repurpose them into beer coolers, and needed the holes closed for that to work properly. Lefty called that, *conflicted priorities*.

In Korea, his unit worked on an erosion control project where they built a structure up against the hillside of a mountain road. The projects purpose was to keep the road above from washing down into the motor pool. This structure made of concrete lincoln log type interlocking pieces about the size of parking lot stops. Using a crane, they would stack these structures in squares about twenty feet high and a few hundred feet long, filling them with blast rock out of the quarry, as they built them vertically.

Back on base in a barn during the previous winter, Lefty helped pour the concrete into the oil coated steel forms to create these "lincoln logs." They would then cover them with tarps and blow heat under the tarps using a Herman Nelson heater. He would stay up at night babysitting and fueling these heaters in part because he would receive the next day off. Because these heaters tended to blow up, no one else was anxious to take on this task. Of course Lefty carried his *don't give a shit* draftee attitude with him at all times.

Lefty also spent time traveling in the trucks while out on TDD. They traveled to and from the rock quarry hauling the needed blast rock. The Army required two men, a driver and a spotter to be present in each truck. His official job at the worksite was generator operator, which unofficially meant he ensured that the refrigerator kept their beer cold. They lived in tents, with dirt floors and no heat, but they somehow managed to acquire a fridge and keep it stocked with cold beer. Ah, the priorities of young men thousands of miles away from home. He built a sandbagged shed for the generator, topped with the wood framed canvas roof from the five-ton dump truck. He setup two 55-gallon gasoline barrels for fuel supply and the generator would run for days without refueling. Lefty planned this to have time to ride the trucks as a spotter, and avoid other grunt work.

Whenever their travels took them near an Air Force base, they would stop to eat. Since the food was airlifted in, these guys enjoyed a massive buffet with three kinds of meats, potatoes, and vegetables. In contrast, the Army grunts were trucked in the less desirable foods which frequently meant choices between hot dogs and hamburgers or occasionally roast beef and liver. When finished eating at the mess hall they scraped their plates into garbage cans, where the common saying was to remember that today's garbage, is tomorrows fruit salad.

When they went out in the field and were not near a base, they would eat K-rations, apparently left over from the Korean War. These meals came in cans and they opened them with the small can openers that they kept on their dog tag chains around their necks. They also came with a small charcoal piece and a disposable stand to hold the can. They could then heat up a can of ham and eggs chopped for example, to a nasty lukewarm mess of a congealed greasy food-related substance. These *meals* also contained canned fruit, a canned dessert, and included two unfiltered cigarettes in the package. Many times as they traveled, they would punch a hole in the top of a can of so-called food, and place it on the truck exhaust manifold to heat up while going down the road.

When they ran the trucks offsite, strict discipline did not exist allowing them to pick up a twelve pack of beer at the PX for the quarry roundtrip. Typically a whole day trip, they drove over bad dirt roads which led to the center of the country, and then to a four lane north and south concrete highway which ran the country's entire length. The iron pipe barricades dividing the north and south lanes had steel wheels on them to allow them to roll away, and the highway used as an airstrip in the event of another war. Once at the highway exit, they faced many more miles of bad dirt roads to get to the quarry.

They also learned to split shift these trucks for maximum acceleration through the manipulation of both shift levers. Hooking their left arm through the steering wheel to shift the Hi-Lo transfer case lever, the driver would use their right hand to shift the main transmission gearshift lever. They would then be able to shift from 1st low to 1st high to 2nd low to 2nd high and so forth. This was a learned skill, not unlike speed shifting his hot rods.

Because they made these all-day trips[60] to the quarry hauling the blast rock, they wanted maximum speed on the four-lane highway, especially for the return trip with blast rock loaded level to the top of the truck sidewalls. Using a combination of fuel screw adjustment on the diesel engine fuel pump, stretching the waste gate spring in the turbocharger, and mixing gasoline with the diesel fuel, their top speed increased.

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[60] *These quarry runs were often made at night during curfew.*

They discovered that putting enough fuel into the engine, would cause the unburned excess to run up the vertical exhaust pipe on the passenger side of the cab to deliver a nice-looking six-inch orange red flame when meeting the outside air at the angled exhaust pipe outlet. Flipping down the engine side panel, would reveal the turbocharger glowing a nice bright cherry red. The Continental truck engines were labeled as multi-fuel, and they all decided that this meant they could fill up one of the trucks 50-gallon saddle tanks with diesel and the other with gasoline. They would then use the electric transfer pump switch to sweeten the diesel fuel with gasoline from time to time. As a result, the necessary engine oil changes became more frequent than normal.

One time a truck driver came back from the quarry with one giant rock that filled the entire bed of his five-ton dump truck, as a joke. He either forgot to calculate or did not care if the truck would drive the heavy load up the mountain road to the base. When the truck could not, the sergeant made him break the giant boulder up inside the truck bed with a jackhammer. It turned out to be not so funny anymore, at least for him.

Lefty and a mechanic buddy named Boldt from Pennsylvania also repaired these vintage trucks. The many years of accumulated grease and dirt made the trucks hard to work on. The solution they found was to drive the trucks into town, and allow the locals to pump diesel fuel out of the tanks in trade for their steam cleaning services.

On one remodel job at a dog kennel, their sergeant was being pressured by the brass to finish the job, but they lacked the necessary materials to accomplish this due to supply problems. Mimicking Marines, the Army guys who liked the discipline lenient Polish Sarge nicknamed Ski, *improvised adapted and overcame,* trading surplus cement bags for water pipes down in the village. They escaped being busted with that one too, but probably would have been court martialed if caught by the brass for doing either.

When back on their home base, Lefty would play for the softball team during the evening games. They would play the other branches of service including the Navy guys who unlike them would have the day off before a game. The Navy guys would meander onto the ballfield in their sloppy dress, long hair,

and scraggy beards, allowed in those days. Lefty got thrown out of one of these games for second-guessing a bad call at second base. This is precisely why you do not want sergeants as umpires, Lefty later fumed to his teammates after the game over some beers.

When his tour was over, he brought back small gifts for each family member, including two sets of beautifully hand carved wood statues of elderly Korean couples as gifts for his paternal and maternal grandparents.

After Christmas leave at home he was required to serve another five months at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. He had requested a transfer to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin, but was denied. On the other hand, he requested to do his first tour in Hawaii before shipping off to Korea. He suspected that the Army just asked this question to mess with them. Bragg was a buttoned up place compared to Korea, and he did not enjoy the excessive discipline on base. There were however some perks to being in a more civilized environment.

He met some real characters including a funny little guy named Pagett, who was often teased as being a ridge-running Kentucky hillbilly born with one leg shorter than the other. He was comical and said self-deprecating things, like "shoot we just got plumbing up to the house last year."

A base movie theater exposed Lefty to adult level movies for the first time. He saw the Fiddler on the Roof movie musical and was shocked that he could be personally moved by a movie. He saw few movies as a kid living in a small town, only family movies like The Shaggy Dog at a Drive-in theater. He did watch some emotionally impacting movies like, To Sir with Love, Bullitt, and Two-Lane Blacktop as a teenager after they moved to the city. At Ft. Bragg, he also saw unsettling and disturbing movies like Brewster McCloud, and Vanishing Point.

At Ft. Bragg he got pulled over for speeding off base one time and the cop only gave him a warning perhaps because he was a GI and didn't notice or ignored that fact that he carried a suspended Illinois license, had offered an expired Missouri vehicle registration as proof of ownership, and displayed expired Delaware license plates on the Buick.

He did not have much access to music but did have a radio in his barracks, for late-night FM stations back when disk

jockeys practiced the now lost art of blending the music selections from song to song. Listening in the evenings, he heard the mesmerizing and haunting voice of Janis Ian's "Stars".

He drove his dump truck around base for various construction projects. Lefty's work ethic came from his dad and he did the required work, including dirty jobs pumping out a sewage ditch, shoveling dirt or whatever. Many guys spent more effort hiding from work, than was required to just do it. Alternatively, they reported to sick call. As a result, the sergeants depended on him for some leadership, and tolerated his short timer draftee attitude. He felt like the one-eyed man, made king in the land of the blind.

A few months before his discharge, his unit needed to support Marine and Army Airborne units playing war games out in the woods. Because their engineering unit was a support unit for the 82nd Airborne, their job would be to make roads and otherwise support these war game operations. They formed up a big slow truck convoy for the 150-mile whole day trip towards the coast, near the Marine base at Camp Lejeune.

After setting up their tent camp, they hauled culverts to make roads into the woods, and hauled sawdust from a local sawmill back to camp and place around the Generals' tent so he would not get his boots muddy. As a northerner, Lefty had never been down south before, and was amazed at how the sawdust pile was white with the now exposed termites as the loader scooped buckets to fill his truck at the sawmill.

Despite the tent camping and dirt floors, he liked being in the woods, as always. This despite tree spiders the size of saucer plates and hundreds of little babies riding on their backs, which would roam their living spaces. He and his buddy Reno from the Lake Tahoe area ran barefoot on the trails through the woods, in the early evenings for exercise. This was a place of limited rules, and guys would roll out of their bunks in the morning fire up a joint, or crack a beer, before their eyes completely opened. Coolers of beer sat everywhere. He knew guys adept at rolling a joint in the back of an open deuce and a half[61] going down the road at sixty miles per hour; this was the 70s after all.

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[61] *This is a two and a half ton truck with slated wood benches on each side used for troop transport.*

At one point in his trucking travels, he came across a military convoy in his path, after waiting patiently and driving slowly behind for a while, he decided he did not care for the pace. Unclear regarding the proper Army protocols he pulled out and passed, as Lefty was *Short* now, and gave less of a shit than usual.[62] This soon seemed to be a mistake as he saw in his mirrors the whole convoy stopping behind him, and the blue flashing lights of the Army Jeep closing in, with some MP's who just happened to have a *Bird Coronel* with them. The *bird* inquired "just what the hell did he think *he* was doing passing *his* convoy". Lefty supplied some semi-invented bullshit about being under direct orders from his General to move this sawdust directly back to camp with no delays, and after some back and forth, this worked. The Coronel bought his bullshit, but gave him a stern warning nonetheless. Truth be told, his hurry involved being back to camp in time for beer-thirty with the guys.

They did not have showers at their tent camp only a small lake to bathe in, but were allowed drive a few miles down the road to the base at Camp Lejeune to take showers once a week. Later, everyone would learn that this water had been chemically contaminated for some twenty years.[63]

One early morning some guys he did not know tried to wake him up to drive something they called a *honey wagon*. He told them that he worked some double shifts and was supposed to have the day off, encouraged them to screw off, and went back to sleep. Next thing he knew, a big burly unknown sergeant was standing over his cot barking a direct order to get up and drive a truck. He was *volunteer-assigned* to a crew that would pump out the portable toilets the troops used. They would pump this into a tanker truck, aka *honey wagon*.

Lefty never drove a tanker truck before, but soon figured it out as he could drive anything with wheels since being a teenager. They drove through the encampments out in the

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[62] *Short timer or Short, was a term used by GI's to describe being close to getting out of a place or out of the Army in general. Guys would say things like "I am so short that I need a ladder to get into my truck."*

[63] *During that time, service members and their families living at the base bathed in and ingested water contaminated with harmful chemicals. Some former base residents later developed cancer or other ailments, and claimed that leaders concealed the problem and did not resolve it, or notify them of the risk.*

woods, his team handling the hoses to do the job. When the tanker was full, their directions were to travel through the local town to dump the load at a local landfill site. On their subsequent trip to the town dump, they ran up onto another slow moving convoy and now knowing better, remained behind this time. The locals came out of their houses to line the road and wave to the troops in the truck convoy, with us now bringing up the rear. The honey wagon crew now laughed their asses off watching in the rear view mirrors, as our truck passed, and at how the civilians transitioned from waving their hands to holding their noses as we passed.

Once in the town, they stopped at each stoplight. At one of these stoplights, there was an open Jeep with officers in the next lane over. Lefty stopped short, and some liquid from the over-filled truck splashed over the sides. This was again hilarious to watch the reaction of the officers to the newly discovered aroma.

Back at their temporary camp in the woods, he barely escaped a terrible highway accident when he blew out a tire around a high-speed curve. He always drove fast, and some unknown knucklehead GI put a retread tire on the front left wheel of his dump truck. These typically stayed only on the rear, due to their unreliability, and uncharacteristically, Lefty did not notice the tire being there on this particular truck. This was the worst possible place for a blowout, as this problem could have pushed him into oncoming traffic. He was however able to wrangle his beast of a dump truck over to the side of the road and repaired it shortly after with the spare tire.

They also did some trucking work for a local famer who reciprocated by supplying a pig. Before they broke camp at the end, they all enjoyed a big pig roast out there in the woods.

At one point during this time, they were allowed to bring their civilian vehicles to the camp and wore civilian clothing during their off times. They found a country bar within walking distance of their camp, where they could party and commiserate during their off hours. He first heard Rare Earth's *Think of the Children* on the jukebox there. When the time came for them to leave, and he needed to drive the Buick back, he had someone else drive the car back to base allowing him to drive his truck. After sitting idle for a while, the car battery was dead and it would not start. They did not have any jumper cables, but one of

the guys suggested a *hillbilly jumpstart* method of touching bumpers with another car to achieve a ground connection, and then using a metal coat hanger to connect the positive battery posts. Lefty did this and while it worked the guy failed to mention the coat hanger would become extremely hot in the process and without any gloves, he now had the burn marks on his hands as proof.

After the war games and back on base it became just a matter of going through the Army out-processing paperwork, for release to his long awaited freedom on his 22nd birthday.

Back home after his honorable discharge, he received a letter from the Army inviting him to come and play war-games at the local military base for a couple of weeks. He responded with a well-crafted letter letting them know he was completely disinterested in doing this, as he was now working and planning to attend college in the fall. He not so mildly requested that they leave him the hell alone. He had a lot to say after two years of this indentured servitude, and now he no longer had a reason to hold it in. So he gave them both barrels. Shortly after, he filed for and received Conscientious Objector discharge status, assisted by the great Quakers at The American Friends Service Committee. He did not want to play war games for two weeks every summer with these warmongers at an Army base for the last four years of his six-year total commitment. Now, he was done with the military.

A short time later Nixon resigned in disgrace and Lefty held an honorable discharge signed by a dishonorable man. He hung his framed discharge paper upside down on the wall of his house and with that; his Army circle of life was complete.

Lefty in his funny looking OD green suit

Chapter Three, Entrepreneur

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Back home in Wisconsin now, leaving his experience at DEC in the rearview, Lefty became aware of what Michael Dell and others were doing building and selling custom-configured computers. He decided to start his own business providing custom business computers and technical support for small for-profit and nonprofit businesses within the local three county area. He set up his shop in a 500 sq. ft. three-sided addition he built onto the "L" of their ranch house, overlooking their back yard. He added a cedar board deck and walkway to provide a separate rear entrance. He used some retirement savings, some contractors, his brothers, and his limited but effective carpenter skills to accomplish this.

He built 386SX computers first using SIP and then later SIMM memory modules, small hard disk drives with DOS, WordPerfect, Lotus 123, dBase software and a batch-file menu-system to allow easier program launching for users. He also included a software utility called Dazzle, as a visually entertaining color graphic screen saver.

During the following years, he built these computers with Windows 3.0, 3.11, Windows 95, and Windows versions of office productivity software. He took pride in building high quality computers that he himself would want to use. He used high resolution Viewsonic display monitors, quality steel cases, Intel motherboards, IBM and Northgate keyboards, Maxtor hard disk drives, 3Com[64] network cards from his old buddy's company. He used both 3Com and US Robotics modems, and Microsoft mice. He installed plenty of ram memory, with sufficiently sized hard disk drives. These were rather expensive computers, due to the quality of the components. He used Intel 386SX then 386DX and

[64] *Robert "Bob" Metcalfe co-invented Ethernet, and founded the networking company 3Com. He also formulated Metcalfe's Law, which states that, "The value of a network is equivalent to the square of the number of nodes connected to it." This means the value of being connected to a network increases as an exponential function of the number of people connected to it.*

then later 486DX and SX chips and AMD K4 and K5 processors until the Intel fixed the Pentium chip math flaw, and it became more affordable. He used MFM, RLL, and then later IDE hard disks. He used 386 Max, QEMM, or MemMaker from DOS software maximize use of the first megabyte of computer memory and he also used the Flying Toasters screensaver.

But soon, at the turn of the millennium, he needed to touch each machine he had ever built. He replaced BIOS chips when they were socketed, and updated the BIOS firmware code when not. This would prevent any Y2K bug[65] problems during the rollover to the new millennium.

He created his own home internal client-server network, for document creation, accounting, and data storage. He ran the SETI screensaver on his five-computer office network.[66]

Most of his customers did not know, and did not want to know anything about computers. This required that Lefty teach them to do the same things repeatedly, for them to be able to do their jobs. He often felt like, but tried not to act like Nick Burns,[67] although this would be difficult at times.

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[65] *The Y2K bug was related to the formatting of computer calendar data. Problems were anticipated, and arose, because software often represented the four-digit year with only the final two digits—making the year 2000 indistinguishable from 1900. A twentieth-century date in such programs caused various errors, such as the incorrect display of dates and the inaccurate ordering of automated dated records or real-time events.*

[66] *The SETI software, ran as a screensaver and made use of unused computer processor time to analyze radio signals, looking for extraterrestrial intelligence.*

[67] *Nick Burns is an IT Support guy in a SNL skit, would mock anyone asking for assistance. His catchphrases were an obnoxious "MOVE!!", to get the person asking for help to get out of their desk chair to allow him to fix the problem, along with a loud, sarcastic, "YOU'RE WELCOME!" when he was done.*

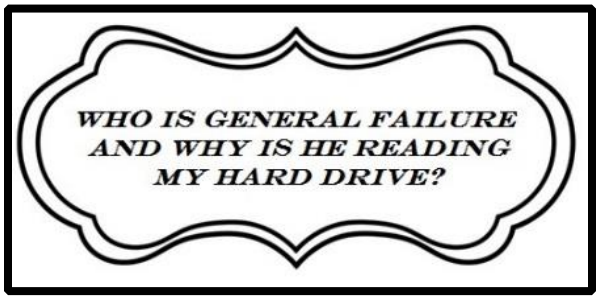
- No, you should not put your saved files in the Recycle Bin for deleted files. That is what My Documents is for. This is also where your documents are backed up from.
- No, you should not share your password with others.
- No, your password cannot be "password" and it cannot be 12345678 either.
- Yes, "right click," means using the right mouse button, not the left.
- Yes, you need to connect the VPN first before you can access the database remotely.
- Yes, you have to click the Send/Receive button to dial out and receive your email.
- Yes, you need to have an email address, or anything else for that matter, spelled precisely correct for it to work on a computer.
- When you use the Format command to format a floppy disk, you do need to make sure it says a:\ and not c:\ when you answer the prompt, Are you sure? Y or N.
- Yes, the Task Bar shows you the programs you have already opened.
- Yes, you can drag and drop a file to copy or move it, which was invented more than ten years ago.
- Yes, the *Copy* command copies the file, and the *Move* command moves the file.
- Yes, simply drag and drop a file to attach it to an email.
- Yes indeed, you need to leave the computer running when you leave work to allow the file backup to run at night.
- No, there is no "Any key" just press the spacebar, when prompted to press any key.
- Yes, you must press the Ctrl, Alt, and Del keys at the same time to reboot the computer system in DOS or to bring up task manager in Windows. (The three finger salute.)[68]
- No, you cannot use the cdrom tray as a coffee cup holder.

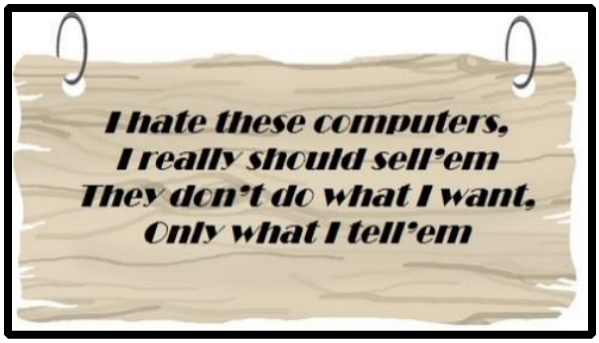
[68] *A three-finger salute refers to the original PC-compatible system command to reboot or restart a computer by depressing three keys simultaneously: Control, Alt, and Delete. MS later made this famous or perhaps infamous, to recover the early versions of Windows from a then frequent crashed or frozen state.*

- Yes, PC LOAD LETTER means you need to load paper into the printer Paper Cassette. What else could this possibly mean?
- No, there is nothing mystical or magical that happens in a computer. A computer is logical and predictable, and so must you be when operating it.

He continued running his computer business, building and supporting many dozens of computers for his customers, while also attending frequent vendor training meetings and computer trade shows around the Midwest.

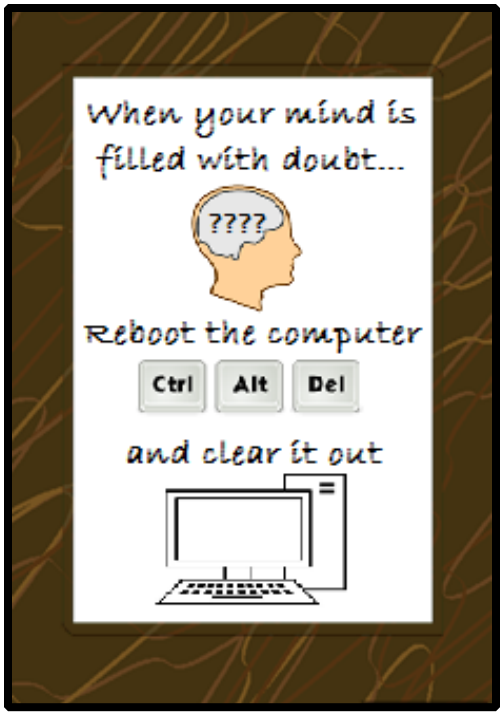
He decorated his office using various plaques and Intel processor posters he collected over the years:[69]





One poster on his office wall read:

[69] *"General failure reading drive c:\" When the disk you try to read is not formatted, or it has other problems, which the system cannot specify.*



Adaptive Computers

At this time, Lefty would also build various custom adaptive computer systems for people with disabilities. This was a sideline to his main computer business. Over the course of many years, his customers became referrals from various agencies and nonprofit groups, which included state and county government agencies. These clients could be mildly disabled because of a car accident, or severely disabled due to injury or diseases like cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, or legal blindness. He would meet them, provide basic skills assessment, and discuss various adaptive options with the client. These systems would vary from voice control, head control, voice synthesis for the visually impaired, or modified hand control, or perhaps include sip and puff control.

Depending on the degree of deficiency in their fine motor skills, a modified keyboard using a keyguard overlay plate would sometimes work and the individual could lay their hand atop the

keyboard and depress keys through keyguard holes. Alternatively, a large print keyboard and large trackball mouse with a single big button or a large track pad rather than a mouse could be used to compensate for impaired motor skills. These devices were generally designed for young children who did not yet have fine motor skills. They also worked fine for disabled adults. The built-in accessibility options in the Windows software would augment these hardware devices.

MS also utilized keyboard shortcut commands for both menu navigation, and command and control, in both DOS and Windows software and in their software application programs.[70]

Voice command and control over Windows became relatively easy as a result. Voice commands would simply execute keyboard shortcut macros built into the operating system and software programs. Each voice command was mapped to a keyboard shortcut, so speaking the word "File," the computer would execute the Alt+F keyboard command and the File menu would cascade down on the screen. Starting there, the user could say *up arrow* or *down arrow* and then Enter to select a command such as Print. Many *abled* computer power users continue to use these keys today and find them faster and easier, such as using Ctrl C for copying text or graphics and Ctrl V for paste. Training the user voice to the commands was accomplished by reading the short stories that accompanied the voice recognition software aloud into the computer microphone. This trained the software, to the user's particular voice patterns. Each word could also be trained individually and repeatedly when necessary. The computer required a high quality soundboard, to be able to process human speech and a good quality microphone for voice recognition. The "show mouse grid" command targeted the mouse clicks on dialog boxes and on other areas of the display screen. The user commands would refine the grid smaller and smaller until the cursor arrow hovered over the target button, and then the user could execute a mouse click command.

Speech dictation, called speech to text, to a computer was difficult even now with the more advanced *continuous* natural

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[70] *As late as the 1980s, Microsoft unsure that people would adjust to using a computer mouse to supplement the keyboard, retained these keyboard shortcuts in the operating system and software programs and made voice control possible.*

speech software and the high-powered hardware available. Back in the pre-Windows days, Dragon Dictate for DOS was the prime program for computer speech use. He determined DOS was too difficult to teach to first time computer users because of the required memorization of the operating system commands.

The most popular word processor at the time was WordPerfect for DOS, which used multilayered function keys. Each keyboard function key, F1 to F12, was assigned four different functions, dependent upon whether the function key was depressed alone or in conjunction with the Shift, Alt, or Ctrl keys. Many companies became deeply invested in this somewhat primitive and inefficient system, especially law offices, and required many years for them to transition to the newer, more efficient, and technical support friendly Windows.

Lefty selected a more obscure but visual voice-control software program; he paired with a word-prediction software program to accomplish the task. This did require the user memorization of the phonetic alphabet, Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie (ABC). The software also required dictation into a dictation window, where the text was later copied and pasted via voice commands, into a word processing document or email. This early technology was called *discrete* speech. It required the user to pause their dictating between each letter character, and between each word. When the user would dictate a character, such as alpha, the "A" would be typed into the on-screen software dictation window. Then a numbered list of ten words beginning with the letter "A" would popup in the word-prediction software window. If the correct word displayed, the user would simply dictate the numeral, 1 to 10, associated with the word. If not displayed, then the next letter was dictated and a fresh list of ten words would be presented beginning with those two letters and so on.

Setting up a voice-controlled computer for a quadriplegic client, also required him to supply a computer system desk that could be rolled up to and effectively used while sitting in a motorized wheelchair. He installed a microphone at the appropriate height and location to allow the user to voice activate the computer. He used adjustable microphone stands similar to what rock bands used, which he bought at a local music store. The tall height of these wheelchairs required a high

desk and these height dimensions would vary depending on the type of motorized wheelchair each client used. Lefty was able to find some surplus computer desktops without legs, buy the necessary steel tubing, and using previously acquired skills, weld together the custom legs for these tables. Later he was able to find a supplier who made expensive, but durable crank adjustable height desks.

During this time he would also attend adaptive equipment conferences to demonstrate the adaptive computer systems which he built. At one of these shows, he was demonstrating voice control software to display multiple voice to text software packages and how to command and control the computer using voice commands. For some fun he also demonstrated using voice commands using a software program to shoot a game of pool. He had memorized a whole series of these obscure voice commands and mouse grid commands to position the pool cue on the table, and mouse right, mouse left, mouse up, mouse down, commands to manipulate the pool cue, and then to shoot. This game was quite easy to play with mouse and keyboard, but quite difficult to do by voice and he was proud of himself for this accomplishment. At some point during the demonstration someone asked "Why can't you just say eight ball in the corner pocket". This is apparently how the Star Trek TV generation expected computers to work.

Head control was the slowest and most difficult adaption method available and deemed appropriate for only the most severely disabled users. He created one of these for a young man who lived with his parents on their farm. This system used a headband reflector worn by the user, and a transmitter placed atop the computer monitor. The user would manipulate the mouse cursor by moving his head up, down, left, right. A mouth tube, called a Sip and Puff control, triggered the activation of the mouse clicks. An onscreen keyboard allowed for the dictation of text. This was the slowest and most difficult to use system he ever built, he was saddened he could provide no better option for this young man. Having a longer perspective later, he saw that he provided him an opportunity to use a computer that did not exist before, but this was still hard for Lefty to accept as the best he could do with the technology available to him.

Screen reader software provided assistance to help his legally blind clients with the ability to use a computer, and he would build these custom computer systems using large screen monitors of at least 21 inches. He would also install and configure a screen-reader software package, which would audibly read the text displayed on the computer screen in a synthesized male or female voice.

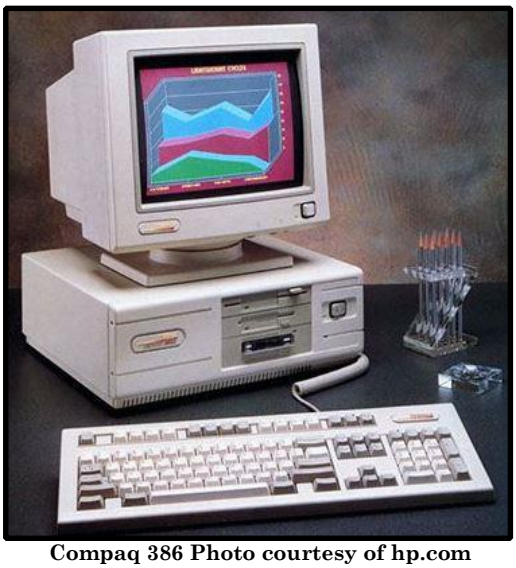
Modified hand control was the most common adaptive setup he created, including one for a young woman made quadriplegic and brain injured from a car accident. When he met her for an assessment, she was using a mouth stick to depress keys on a typewriter while trying to write a book. Lefty replaced her typewriter and mouth stick combination, with a computer and a modified keyboard. A large track pad substituted for a mouse, which she would operate with a single workable finger on one hand. She frequently made mistakes when using the software and Lefty spent many hours training her. She knew his then patient voice well, so he recorded messages of his own voice to respond to system error messages to replace the normal dings or beeps within the Windows software. "I'm sorry Carol, you must first close the open window, before typing" *his* voice would say, rather than a "ding" coming from the computer. He created several of these recordings for her most common mistakes. He also installed a cdrom drive, and speakers that allowed her to play her favorite music while writing her book. He also setup X10 computer controls within her apartment, allowing her to open and close her window blinds and switch lights on and off using the computer.

These clients, impaired with disease or accidental disability, typically lived a shortened life span. It brought Lefty some joy in knowing he could use his skills and experience to improve their abilities and thus the quality of the life remaining for each.

Personal Computers Advance

Compaq then beat IBM to the market announcing the Deskpro 386, the first computer on the market to use Intel´s new 80386 chip, a 32-bit microprocessor with 275,000 transistors on each chip. At 4 million operations per second and 4 kilobytes of memory, the 80386 now gave PCs as much speed and power as older mainframes and minicomputers.

The 386 chip brought with it the introduction of a 32-bit architecture[71], a significant improvement over the 16-bit architecture of previous microprocessors. It had two operating modes, one that mirrored the segmented memory of older x86 chips, allowing full backward compatibility, and one that took full advantage of its more advanced technology. The new chip made graphical operating environments like Windows and IBM OS/2 for personal computers more practical.



Compaq 386 Photo courtesy of hp.com

[71] *32-bit normally means using the 32-bit linear address space. 16-bit microprocessors used a segmented address space and had to switch between segments to reach more than 64 kilobytes of code or data.*

The PS/2 Models 70 and 80 were the first IBM system to include Intel´s 80386DX chip, and the company shipped more than 1 million units by the end of the first year. IBM released a new operating system, OS/2, at the same time, allowing the use of a mouse with IBM PCs for the first time. Many credit the PS/2 for making the 3.5-inch floppy disk drive and video graphics array (VGA) standard for IBM computers. The system was IBM's response to losing control of the PC market with the rise of widespread copying of the original IBM PC design by "clone" makers like Compaq and Dell.

IBM 386 PS/2 Photo courtesy of IBM.com

Intel 386 CPU Photo courtesy of Intel.com

Customers

Lefty continued to support and add clients within the three county area. His clients consisted of small nonprofits who provided services to the disabled or to the elderly. He also serviced a transmission repair shop, other small businesses, one corporate customer, and many end users directly. He also purchased and setup laptop computers for parents who needed them for their kids going off to college.

One of his first large jobs was providing two small networks consisting of five computers, a network server, a laptop, and a projection system, to setup two training classrooms. These training labs for a Fortune 500 company and used to improve the literacy of their factory workers. Still a small business with no employees, he recruited his out of state high school aged nephew during a holiday break to help assemble and configure these systems. Once assembled, they would enlist his basement ping-pong table to connect and configure these small networks.[72]

Most of his business clients were small, but his main nonprofit customer continuously grew and expanded. They provided home care assistance for the elderly and disabled, and they had started from two computers and a small staff. He supported their growth, eventually expanding their operations across three counties. He linked hundreds of computers each custom built, dozens of laptops, four hand-built custom network servers, and dozens of dot matrix, inkjet, and laser printers installed at their three locations.

He wore many hats, being a system builder, system integrator, network administrator, Internet telecommunications technician, training instructor, and technical support agent. He would build and setup each new system, installing the required software, connecting them to their network domain for file access and then providing instruction to each end user. He was a problem solver.

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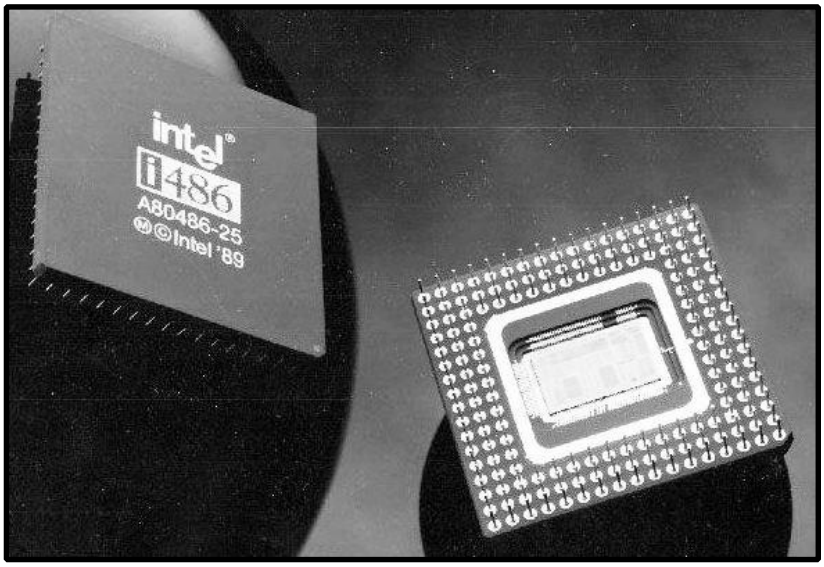
[72] *Lefty would later use this idea to preassemble small school classroom networks at home, prior to delivery, before his nonprofit agency had sufficient building space to accommodate this activity.*

Lefty continued to attend Microsoft and Intel training session at various Midwest locations. He built a network server at one event, the discounted parts provided by Intel with the cost disguised as part of the training fee. At these events, various vendors would donate the parts required, memory, hard disks, and optical drives for installation in the Intel chassis with Intel motherboards and processors. Microsoft would provide the server operating system.

The sound of hearing thirty network servers with cooling fans screaming, running at the same time inside a hotel conference room, is an unforgettable experience. This was pure unadulterated geek heaven to him.



Intel 486 CPU Photo courtesy of Intel.com

Most of the other training sessions involved product road maps for the future, with the speeds and feeds[73] from Intel.

[73] *Speeds and feeds is a metal machining term adopted by Intel to identify all the specifications of new processors, the primary metrics being price, clock speed, and number of processor cores.*

Intel Pentium CPU Photo courtesy of Intel.com

Intel continued to push Moore's Law with their tick-tock model,[74] at a pace which would either drive distant competitor AMD out of business completely, or leave them desperately behind.

Microsoft meetings consisted of product introductions, Windows 98, Vista, XP, Windows NT, various versions of MS Office, and finally Windows 7. Most of these events moved online now, as the days of the big Comdex and PC World Expo computer trade shows was long gone.

Regional trainings still did occur which the always-classy Intel held in hotel conference rooms with a buffet lunch, cloth tablecloths, napkins and real silverware. The much larger Microsoft meetings were held in large conference centers. They included a white box lunch of sandwich, ham or turkey, an apple and a chocolate chip or oatmeal cookie.

He also attended a "bring your own case" event hosted by Microsoft and AMD who provided the required components, for about 30 guys in a hotel conference room, having brought no two computer cases alike in appearance. Walking around the room, he saw these different and impressive systems. This was another geek heaven, to be sure. He built a system for use as a Media PC machine, and gave this system to his second daughter to use with the Windows XP Media Center software for TV, video, audio, as well as other media uses.

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[74] *Tick-Tock follows changes to the microarchitecture with a die shrink of the process technology. Every "tick" represented the shrinking of the manufacturing process and each "tock" a newly designed microarchitecture.*

As a part of growing his business, he also continued to attend Intel Technology Conferences, ITC's, now twice a year. They were online now and were no longer a personal experience. The online version consisted of audio or video webcast feeds. Most of the other trainings became audio only and read from a script, using a PowerPoint slide deck similar to the former in person instructor led programs. Only now, frequently read by heavily accented non-native English speakers, and not nearly as good. The build your own computer training programs, now also disappeared. He also watched video webcasts of the annual Microsoft Developers Conferences, and Win HEC[75] shows.

He kept his hand in the teaching/training profession by substitute teaching at the local school computer labs, and with some other computer, technical writing and part-time teaching positions. He worked as a part time contract instructor, teaching Windows 95 and Office 95 Word and Excel, to hundreds of local county staff over a period of months.

After ten plus years, he stopped teaching and transitioned his computer business customers over to an alternate equipment procurement and technical support option. He now needed to concentrate on his nonprofit business idea, full time. The necessary hundred-hour workweeks made it simply impossible to operate both businesses while living any kind of a reasonable personal life. He transitioned his customers and moved his office into the nonprofit facility to be able to run the agency full time.

Much like Microsoft's Gates later would do, he dedicated his time now to a philanthropic endeavor. Not giving away his money, but giving his efforts, and talents to provide opportunities for those less advantaged than himself. These opportunities could be achieved by using his non-profit agency's provided computer technology, Internet access and skills training, to level the playing field for education and employment.

Now twenty years past his close call with death in Vietnam, he felt that he was now playing with house money. He felt that he now needed to *earn* his good fortune and inherited privileges. He felt that he owed this to those near sixty thousand young men of his generation who did not come home alive.

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[75] *Windows Hardware Engineering Conference*

Chapter Four, Family

C:\novel\chap4\type family.txt ↵

The third oldest of eight children, their clan would later grow to ten when his six sisters and three brothers all had arrived. Lefty had memories two double beds inside each bedroom, which placed the boys in one room, the girls in another, and a baby typically in his parents' bedroom.

His dad was raised on the farm bought by his Great Grandfather, who came to America to escape the then frequent wars in Germany or Prussia. His paternal Grandfather took over the farm, to keep his son's home safe, and the family fed during two World Wars and The Great Depression. His Grandpa also worked at a factory as a tool and die maker in a nearby company town, to help support the farm. When bad weather did not allow him to travel back home after work, he would stay overnight at the company owned barracks building. Now renovated into a hotel, he and his family once stayed there overnight to recreate a connection to his now deceased grandfather. [76]

Lefty's mother was born and raised there in the town where he grew up. Her father purchased a local dairy operation, and with his four sons, made cheese and bottled milk from local small dairy farmers. His maternal Grandfather cooked in a lumberjack camp up in the northwoods in the early 1900s, when they cut down the trees to build large cities like Milwaukee, and big ships at the many shipyards doting the coast of Lake Michigan.

As the first user of computers in his family, Lefty became the self-appointed family genealogist, and corresponded with distant relatives in Germany via postal mail.

His great aunt Elisabeth had initiated contact with one of Lefty's uncles. He was a factory worker, who was not inclined toward genealogy. Upon discovering this, Lefty took up the

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[76] *The 1918 American Club hotel building originally housed the Kohler Company's immigrant factory workers, who were primarily of German heritage. It also served as a school for them to learn English, citizenship, and eat their meals in the large dining halls. This facility later became The American Club, which is now a luxury spa resort.*

communication in English, which she had translated on her end by a local farmer friend.

He asked many questions of her, verified what he had discovered, and kept her informed of his efforts.

Dear Aunt Elisabeth,

I am tracking down my ancestors by spending time researching at a local Mormon church[77]*, as well as local university libraries. As I research this information, I record it using a family tree computer program to create a database. My greatest discovery so far is the Naturalization papers of my great grandfather.* [78] *These papers revealed that he was hereby swearing to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty and particularly to the German Emperor William II. Giving further assurances that he was not an anarchist*[79]*, a polygamist, or a believer in the practice of polygamy*[80]*, he swore that it was his intention in good faith to become a citizen of the US and permanently reside therein. He then received his Certificate of Naturalization, signed by two character witnesses.*

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[77] *The Mormons believe that they can use these family history records to give the deceased the ability to be saved in the afterlife.*

[78] *Lefty's great, great, grandfather, had been a shoemaker in Germany. His newly immigrated great grandfather would find work at a leather tanning factory and then later a shoe manufacturer.*

[79] *The Immigration Act of 1903 also called the Anarchist Exclusion Act was enacted because a self-proclaimed anarchist had assassinated President William McKinley.*

[80] *The Immigration Act of 1891 relisted categories of excludable aliens, adding polygamists.*

These witnesses swore that they were well acquainted with the petitioner and to their knowledge and belief; he resided in the state for the past one year, and has behaved himself as a man of good moral character. In addition, that he was attached to the principles of the US Constitution and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same.

Over the years, I added to this genealogy database and printed out ten-foot long dot matrix sheets of descendant trees on continuous feed paper each year for our family reunions. I spread these out across several picnic tables and asked my relatives to make any corrections, or additions of weddings, births, or deaths. After sometime, I made a family tree booklet that was the laser printed pages of descendant's trees, and I distributed them widely to these relatives. These family reunions needed the facilities of a city public park because of my one hundred cousins and large extended family. We also had tremendously hard fought and competitive baseball games at those reunions.

A couple of decades later, spurred by questions from a niece for a school homework assignment, I created a seventy plus page family tree book including more than two hundred photographs, covering a hundred twenty plus years of family history. The afterword of the book summed up my work on this project.

> I began this genealogy quest in the late seventies, having returned home from time spent in both Korea and Africa, and questioning my grandfather about our family history. He deflected my questions, saying his father was a draft dodger, and doing all of this work would only create a list of names. However, my thought process evolved over the years to having in mind something that could be much more than that.
>
> What you have seen and read in the previous pages is far more than a list of names; I believe these pages tell a story. A story about what has transpired over the course of one hundred twenty three years,

> through both triumphs and tragedies, after a brave young German immigrant named Franz left his family home and came to America seeking a better life. This Family Tree book honors the courage of this young man not to go to war, but instead set out on an adventure that lead to the creation of all of us.

A Rhine and Mosel river cruise trip in Germany was a celebration of a second marriage anniversary milestone, but also became a back to his roots trip for Lefty. He probably saw more of Germany on this trip, than his Great Grandfather ever did.

The cruise started by heading south on the now straightened Rhine river from Manheim, Germany to Basel, Switzerland, and appeared to be a series of barge drag races between each successive shipping lock.[81] This water superhighway was jammed with multicolored shipping container laden barges on the rapidly flowing water. Time delays at these locks would last hours and by rumor, were time dependent on the ship captain's willingness to indulge in bribes to achieve the timeliest service. Not highlighted within the cruise promotional materials, was that the long daylight delays at these locks would cause them to pass many once in a lifetime attractions and gorgeous scenery, while asleep during the dead of night.

[81] *A lock is a device used for raising and lowering boats, ships and other watercraft between stretches of water at different levels on waterways.*

On the return trip from Basel turning left or to port, at the German Corner[82], their converted river barge headed up the winding Mosel river. This frequent meandering water, displayed yet another hilltop castle seemingly at each bend. These castles required hundreds of years to build, and now many were undergoing decade's long renovations. This winding river gave the impression that you could walk the nearby shore faster than the ship could navigate the many turns. The riverbanks were steeply sloped land containing vineyards with the occasional small chapel at the top.

The meals on their cruise were multicourse, overly rich, and lengthy. The refilling of wine glasses by attendants, was over generous to a fault. Our group of Americans were placed together at a front table with a view, for conversational purposes and they met some interesting people over the course of the trip.

A trip to a local beer garden allowed him to sample the local mashed potatoes, bratwurst, and sauerkraut, with massive sized glasses of the local beers.

While accommodating his *Dude-like*[83] taste for White Russians at the ships bar, Lefty discovered that the widely acclaimed trait of German precision was not however a desirable attribute for a bartender. Other Americans taking the trip were overheard ordering a second drink, only under the condition that this time he would put some booze in it.

During a layover at the last Mosel River destination at Trier, founded by the Romans in the late 1st century BC and the oldest city in Germany, he rented a car for a side trip. The car was a nice Audi A4 with a "four on the floor" manual transmission. This was the most powerful and cool car he had an opportunity to drive in some time, and wanted to have some fun. He drove through the mountain switchbacks and hairpin turns to the village where his Great Grandfather was born. Few road signs existed, and the roads narrow to the point that he had difficultly

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[82] *Koblenz is a German city situated on the Rhine at its confluence with the Moselle, where the German Corner and its monument of Emperor William I on horseback are situated. The name is from the Latin for confluence or "merging of rivers."*

[83] *The Big Lebowski is a movie that stars Jeffrey "The Dude" Lebowski, a Los Angeles slacker and avid bowler, with a habitual taste for White Russian cocktails. Vodka, Kalua and Cream simple yet tasty Lefty agrees.*

at times determining if he was on the highway or had mistakenly diverted onto a bike trail. He encountered roundabouts that he knew how to navigate from previous experience in Korea and Africa, and Yield signs were he expected to see Stop signs. It takes some guts to drive in Germany, he determined. The uncontrolled intersections seemed to challenge you, *if you think you can make it, go ahead, and go for it.*

His final destination now a bedroom community, but sadly not much remained, only a place where people commuted to and from their jobs in nearby larger cities. He saw some farms and wind turbines on a hill that overlooked the small town, and he was able to have a great view of the surrounding hills and valleys of farmland. He met a local couple who brought in a friend who spoke some English. They showed him the mid-1800's house where his Great Grandfather was born, as they rarely tear anything down over there. His limited African French did him no good, despite being close to the French border in this now German Alsace-Lorraine region. He did not put any effort into learning German before the trip. He was now thinking that this was perhaps an oversight. He connected with a local man however, who provided him with a German language cdrom of local church records for the period his relatives lived there.

The families native language was lost during the time of the two World Wars when speaking German in America, especially after the internment of the Japanese Americans[84], was viewed as imprudent. Lefty's Great Grandfathers 1943 grave marker reads the more prudent Americanized Frank rather than his given name Franz.

Computers, and the knowledge of how to use them, led Lefty to record his families genealogy putting this information into a database. He did not know yet what he would do with this info, but wanted to have it nonetheless. Eventually he would use his publishing skills to document his family history with progressively improved detail, on two different occasions over the years.

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[84] *The internment of Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II was a forced relocation and incarceration of people of Japanese ancestry. They also lost all of their property. Much later, they received some reparations for this seemingly inhumane act.*

As his aunts and uncles eventually passed over the years, Lefty would pen short semi humorous stories on their Funeral Home obituary Guest Books to help comfort friends and relatives and I guess to follow the long traditions of this act.

> *The last time I saw Irene was at Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee when Dick was there, and came up to visit as I was living in Racine at the time. She was very sad, and alone behind a curtained waiting area, but cheered up a bit when she told me some stories about her big brother and my dad Joe, and a story about her and Dick. It seems that sometime back in the 50's Dick had come to the farm to pick her up for a date, and at that time she just happened to be backing the manure spreader into the barn with a tractor. Dick was a truck driver and as such a recognizer of those talents, so when he saw her do that he said to himself "that's my girl" and at that point their deal was sealed.*
> *She also helped me over the phone several years ago with the family tree book I was creating. It was funny but she was just insistent that I include the names of their pet farm horse and cows in our Pitsch family tree.*
> *Irene was one of my favorite aunties, because she was very kind and understanding to me especially when I was a child and also as an adult. RIP.*
> *I wish to express my sincere condolences to all my cousins at this difficult time for you all.*

During the late 1990's Lefty heard Bill Clinton talking in a television interview about the two years he spent writing his book, My Life. He mentioned that he thought parents over the age of fifty needed to make time to write down some things for their children, as many of them know little of their family history but should, he opined.

The process Clinton went through filled twenty-two notebooks of longhand writing to create his thousand-page tome. This sounded to Lefty like it had become been part of a healing process for Bill. This had apparently helped him overcome some of the personal and professional problems, and the sadness he had experienced over the past few years. Lefty could certainly relate.

He decided at that moment, to write and email some of his growing up stories to his estranged youngest daughter.

My Growing up, Story One

My first memories as a boy come from our small town rented lower floor home. I remember our house being next door to a hardware store that also sold tractors. I would sometimes sit on the seat of one of these pretending to drive, until being shooed away by some grownup.

We played with a coaster wagon, scooter, tricycle, and one of those pedal tractors. I hooked the wagon behind it to haul dirt, rocks, and stuff, pretending to farm.

I recall watching out the window as my older brother, and sister left for school, with me having to stay home to play alone, which made me sad. Babysitters cared for us sometimes on weekends, probably Saturday nights, when dad played drums in a polka band. I especially recall one time when my brother and I invented this game where we crawled out our bedroom window, ran around to the back door back into the house, doing this loop repeatedly as a game. The sitter needed to call our Aunt for help controlling us. That fun got us into big trouble.

I do remember at some point earlier we suffered the chicken pox together, and were put in a room with three cribs that included my older brother and sister. I guess they put kids together those days to all get sick at the same time, apparently to make things easier for the parents. Later on I remember us having our tonsils removed at the same time. I don't know if dad got a "buy two get one free" deal or why they commonly did this back then. My brother and sister were released from the hospital, but I stayed behind because I wasn't recovering. I also recall getting what I thought was a cool metal airplane from my parents during my extended hospital stay, perhaps as a consolation. I was

finally released from the hospital, but then mom took me to the local doctor because I was still sick. Sitting on the examining table the doctor examined my throat, took his forceps and quickly removed something, and suspiciously threw it into the trash. When mom questioned him about this, he explained that the surgeon left a piece of gauze behind, and remember my mother being angry at this mistake. Later I learned that this error could have caused sepsis, and possibly my death.

I also remember being at the doctor to have my ears cleaned of excessive earwax, with a warm water solution and suction. After the procedure, the doctor told me to hop off the examining table, and I promptly fell to the floor. The doctor quipped "oh yes this procedure sometimes makes them dizzy." Your grandma years later would tell me how mad she was about his behavior. That was medical care in those days, I guess.

The first house my parents bought cost five thousand dollars I found out later. There was this old phone in the kitchen where you talked into a mouthpiece, held the handset to your ear, and turned the crank to signal the operator to make a call. The house offered no indoor bathroom, just the outhouse outside. Because of that fact, my brother and I experienced some fun in helping dad smash out a wall of plaster and lath using sledgehammers to convert the existing pantry into a bathroom. We also watched dad and some men dig out a basement under the backside of the house to create expand the basement and provide an indoor entrance. The house also came with a big barn behind which was once used as a horse stable. We used spend time there exploring stuff. We also planted a huge garden, which I hated to weed, but I liked to

pick raspberries and pull up carrots, wash them off under the outside faucet, and eat them as a summertime snack.

This is where the event occurred that mom called the day she almost threw me away. It seems that dad was tilling the garden with a rototiller and I decided to help by using my toy tractor and plow. There on my hands and knees in the dirt, "helping", I filled my diaper. I must have really been a mess.

Out behind the garden was a farm pasture, which sometimes contained grazing steers. We got into trouble for throwing rocks near them to make them to moo and fuss, never trying to hit them of course. The surrounding fence would give an electrical shock to the touch or especially if you peed on it. My brother and I also played in this field, away from the cows and cow pies, to shoot arrows up into the air to watch them land. We acted stupid, but had fun nonetheless. We had each received bow and arrows for Christmas that year, took lessons on how to use them, and great fun using them. We must have both forgotten the safety part of these lessons. My brother once shot an arrow into a backyard rabbit we hunted down. The target arrow hit right into the middle of the rabbit, sticking out of both sides. The rabbit ran under a huge trash pile and he lost the arrow and the rabbit, which was a big deal in those days.

Next door was a lumberyard and I used to wander around over there because I liked the smell of fresh cut lumber and I would visit with a guy who made cabinets and such. He would allow me to take scraps of lumber, which I would bring home and try to nail together into something. I never made anything decent, and remain more of a wood butcher than a carpenter even today. This building, built up on stilts above the ground, due to the

nearby marsh, turned out to be exactly where our pet rabbits would hide when they got out of their cages. Mom eventually needed to climb under there to retrieve them. When I was a little older maybe ten or eleven, I used to help one of the brothers, who ran the lumberyard unload railroad boxcars of lumber. We would pile the 2x4's and such into the tractor bucket and then move, unload, and stack them in the covered lumber racks. It was hard physical work moving this lumber, but I liked having these distractions when I could not play baseball. When we got down to the last board inside the rail car, he would always say, "Ah, this is the one we've been looking for," which was somewhat humorous the first time or two. On occasion, he would pull out pocket change and send me next door to the farmers' Co-op to get us sodas. That kind of treat was a real big deal in those days.

One time after a particularly heavy snowstorm, some of us kids climbed up the snowdrifts to the top of these roofs, and made some fun jumping off landing waist deep into the head high snowdrifts. We were busted by a neighbor lady who saw us, and called mom. You couldn't get away with too much mischief in a small town, because everyone knew whose kid you were.

The farmer's Co-op sat at the end of our dead end road, with a wooded area out behind. When I didn't occupy my time playing baseball, however rare, I would also spend hours walking the woods, catching tadpoles to bring home and put into a goldfish bowl. I would bring my bow and a leather quiver of target arrows, to pretend at hunting wild creatures, which at most would be a squirrel or occasional rabbit. I would sit listening to the birds singing, the woodpeckers tapping, check the ponds for tadpoles and frogs, and sometimes walk through the woods, over the barb

wire fence up to the state highway. They built a rest stop at the highway, complete with bathrooms and a hand operated pump water well, which provided some cold and tasty drinking water.

This place to stop your car and rest struck me as odd, as I'd never been further than thirty miles from home by car. Coming out of the peaceful woods to the sights and sounds of high-speed car traffic was strange and always a bit disorienting. Then as now, there was something about being in the woods that brought me some inner peace. This is why later in life I liked going up to the northwoods each summer for vacation. Love, Dad

To be continued…

He then penned another story for his daughter.

My Growing up, Story Two

Walking through the woods near our house, I would encounter a barbed wire fence line and I would crawl over and continue up to the wayside at the two lane state highway. Now this is a county highway because they built the new interstate highway through, which ate up forty acres of farmland for each of the 120 miles length including the six or so miles that split the town. The locals created some big protests over the loss of more than five thousand acres of prime farmland consumed by this highway during the mid-seventies but in the end, they lost their fight, and the road was built regardless. In a bicentennial booklet remembrance of these times your grandmother gave me, the story of their resistance was written in a compelling manner.

> *"In the year of the American Bicentennial, a culmination of controversy between farmers and government officials responsible for forcing a highway through the area resulted in the arrests of highly respected citizens in opposition of the highway because of its effect on the local agriculture. The farmers requested that the highway be superimposed onto the existing roadbed and be scaled down so as to retain more land for individual Americans to engage in free enterprise, rather than revert it to the centralized government. They planted American flags in front of bulldozers. Several of those arrested and jailed for trespassing were descendants of the founders of the town, who had carved productive farms out of a wilderness. These early German settlers chose Wisconsin, because its climate so closely paralleled that of their native German lands."*
>
> *"Their descendants believed that governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed and voted against the highway. When the highway department and legislators ignored them, they took milk cows and a calf to the lawn of the State Capitol. They*

stayed there for a month and gathered 22,000 signatures on petitions against the highway."
"But in the end the then Governor, approved the construction reflecting a changing of God's green acres into a man-made thoroughfare over and above the cries of the people who thought it to be both imprudent and wasteful."

That old highway is the one we used to take us south to a nearby town for shopping and also where I enjoyed my first taste of McDonald's food. This was a big deal in those days. We also used to visit Grandpa when he worked at the department store Will-Call window, long after he retired from running the dairy in his seventies. Those days a trip to the city with mom driving the car was a major event. They would sometimes stop at the gas station with glass cases of premiums in the pump islands, where you could trade for merchandise with the small coupons, you pasted into a book, given with gasoline purchases. They might have been called S&H green stamps.

That same road, also took me to baseball games in surrounding towns and eventually to the championship game in the big city to the north. We would ride out bikes across this road to school up the hill from where we lived which was down closer to the lake.

I might have told you I rode my bike "uphill" both ways to school but that wasn't exactly accurate. I received a speedometer for my bike at one birthday, and coming home from school we would ride down the big hill split in two by the highway, and many times we didn't stop for the stop

sign. We would cut directly across the busy highway to see how fast the speedometer on my bike would reach.

I do not know exactly what my maternal Grandpa did his whole life, but I do know he was a cook in a lumberjack camp in northwoods as a younger man. Then later he bought a cheese factory and dairy in town, teaching himself cheese making from a book, according to mom. My three uncles on that side of the family worked at the dairy, and one uncle who would later become my baseball coach, lived with his wife in the small second floor apartment above the dairy. Later after the dairy closed, one uncle started a boat business in a nearby town. Dad with my brother and I, would help him assemble new boat trailers on the shop floor of the old dairy. Grandpa also raised mink and later turkeys out behind the dairy. He would sell the mink furs to a buyer in New York City, my aunt told me.

This is the town where your Grandma grew up and where they eventually settled after they married. When I was young and questioned your Grandpa why he married your Grandma, he explained that he rode a motorcycle in those days and traveled east with the sun in his eyes to visit her. When he drove back home the sun was in his eyes again in the evening. He eventually just got tired of having the sun in his eyes all the time. He was quite the romantic.

Back to my Grandpa, he was this kind old grandpa guy to us kids and taught us how to play card games like Sheepshead. At supper when you would ask him to pour

you a little extra milk, he would put about three drops in your glass as a tease. He was always joking around and would tell us his groaner Grandpa jokes. When he would see bird poop on a car, he would say that a bird must want to buy it, because he left a deposit. Sometimes my older brother and I would walk to their house, which was not far from ours, to cut the grass for them sometimes during the summer. We were annoyed at having to move the lawn ornaments in the way. There were pink flamingos, large silver balls on stands, a birdbath, a statue of an old black man holding a fishing pole and similar items. This is where the infamous incident occurred where my brother ran into their house yelling that he had killed me.

Told not to explore Grandpa's shed, but little boys being little boys, we tried to slide the large shed door open. The door came off the track, and tipped over falling on top of us, with me pinned in the middle and my brother near the edge. My brother was able to slide out and go for help. Everyone ran out of the house and lifted the door to allow me to slide out from under it. We got into big trouble for that, but this was tempered by some relief at me not actually being dead.

My maternal grandparents' house was behind the fire station where the firemen would flood the adjoining field for the kids to use for ice-skating during the winters. We would sometimes go to Grandma's to warm up instead of the firehouse, as she would treat us from the always-present "standard Grandma inventory" of cookies and candy.

Grandpa lived to the age of eighty-four but died as a result of complications from a hernia surgery. While retired Grandpa built lawn furniture including Adirondack chairs, in the basement and did a lot of painting around town. He also liked cracking a raw egg into his pilsner of beer in the afternoons, and watching All-Star wrestling on TV. He enjoyed the antics of wrestlers called the Crusher and Bo-Bo Brzezinski, each with his own unique wrestling move; perhaps today they would be called a superpower. This move, a headlock or head butt, would ensure a victory at the end of the match. His large console TV had a stand with film on the floor in front of it, and this was designed to turn the black and white TV into color. Well, sort of.

I served my first mass as an altar boy at my great Grandmas funeral, and was scared to death because I did not know how to follow any of the rituals. Those days the service, conducted in Latin rather than English, required we memorize what we needed to say. The priest was stern but showed me some understanding for the most part.

This same priest later took us summer fishing for bullheads at the local dam, and winter ice fishing for whitefish on a nearby lake. The bullheads would sting you until you learned how to correctly take them off the hook. We would cut holes in the ice using big iron chisels, setting tip-ups with minnows on a hook for bait. We would sit in his fish shanty watching for tip-up flags out of the window, while playing cards. He would drive his Mercedes car

around the lake visiting people, dropping his car through the ice on one occasion, I later heard. Another time he came back to find us sleepy and groggy in the shanty, only to discover the pilot light in the heater was out and the shanty was filling up with propane gas.

At times in school when I misbehaved, the nuns would send me to visit the parish priest at the rectory, who would send me out to shovel snow, mow grass, or do other work outside. This didn't upset me, as I probably did not want to be inside anyway. Our parish priest was for the most part a stern, occasionally jolly, but overall a good guy. Love, Dad

To be continued…

Chapter Five, The Internet

C:\novel\chap5\type internet.txt ↵

Lefty began beta testing versions of the MS Windows software, having been invited into the program beginning with the multimedia extensions and Video for Windows 3.1, and then later through Windows 95, and 98. Over the years, he would continue beta testing prerelease versions of Windows XP, Vista, and Windows 7, 8, and finally Windows 10. He did this testing because he needed to plan for his businesses and due to his continued curiosity about technology, which dated back to his fortuitous side trip to Albuquerque back in the 70's. He provided feedback to MS about how the software worked or did not work, filed bug reports, and discussed what he liked or disliked with other computer geeks via the Internet forums.

What had eventually made Windows into a worldwide operating system monopoly was ease of installation, ease of use, and ease of technical support. Users learned to expect consistent operation from the operating system, and the programs that ran under it. In the previous DOS operating system, each software program, spreadsheets, word processors, etc. used their own unique interface, and required the resultant learning curve to operate. Installation of these older programs also required individual configuration, and installation of separate print and video drivers for each of them. Now these were all common.

His first exposure to telecommunications and the online world came via computer bulletin boards, BBS's[85], and then later the CompuServe service. The geeks used CompuServe, and his email address 70671.2235@compuserve.com reflected that. The non-geeks used Prodigy or America Online, and used addresses like lucky@aol.com. These people, looked down on by the geeks

[85] *A bulletin board system, or BBS, is a computer server running software that allows users to connect to it using a terminal program. Once logged in, the user can perform functions such as uploading and downloading software and data, reading news bulletins, and exchanging messages through email, as well as in public message boards.*

as newbies, were held largely responsible for diminishing the quality of Internet community in many different ways when they later found their way there. AOL in particular tried to blanket the world with their cdrom installation discs, and at one time, fully half of CDs manufactured worldwide had AOL logos on them. Those cd's ended up inside your mailbox, magazines, stores, movie theaters, at shopping malls and seemingly everywhere else. They were shoved on people when renting videos, and given out with the free peanuts on airlines. They even put AOL signs on billboards and NYC city buses. Many of those who installed this software, messed up their computers and Lefty spent some time helping them recover from this lack of good judgement.[86]

Connected to BBS's, Lefty downloaded programs and chatted some. CompuServe however, became the place where discussion groups had evolved to become particularly interesting to him, including those involved in computer hardware, software, and desktop publishing. Members used these groups to discuss ideas, trade solutions to problems, and to socialize. He was an active participant and rarely lurked[87], due to the cost. In time, he became an Assistant System Operator or SysOp, which entitled him to some free time on the service, which was a costly endeavor. During early days, he paid for the modem call to the phone company and then paid for time by the hour on the CompuServe service. As an Assistant SysOp, his job involved downloading programs other users uploaded to the service, checking them for function and viruses. His work helped defray this extensive cost.

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[86] *Lefty once collected a large box of these cd's and set them to a couple guys who were so disgusted by this AOL pollution and waste of natural resources, that they created a website with the mission of collecting enough to fill a dump truck. Once they collected these million discs, they would drive it to AOL's headquarters in Virginia to dump them at AOL's front door. It is unclear if this ever happened.*

[87] *A Lurker is someone who reads and observes ongoing discussions on a message board without participating.*

Lefty lived near a midsized city, but it was a technology backwater. A snail-slow 2400 baud was the fastest modem connection he could attain locally. He alternated dialing to Milwaukee or Chicago as they continually upgraded their services, first to 9600kbps, then 14,400k, 28,800k, and finally to 56k.[88] At one point, he purchased a 9600k modem at half price as an assistant sysop deal. With a front mounted LCD display readout, this modem was the coolest thing on his desk.

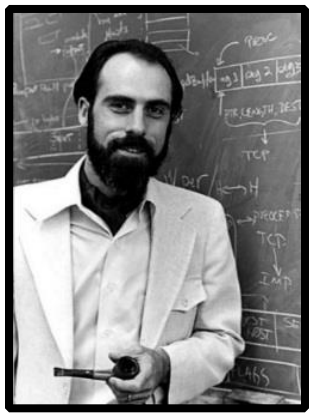
Later he would dial an 800 number and connect to the nascent not yet publically available Internet.[89]

[88] *In telecommunications, data transfer rate is the average number of bits passing between equipment in a data transmission system. The data rate unit is abbreviated as kbps, or simply "K."*

[89] *The origins of the Internet were in the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Its purpose was expanding the frontiers of technology and science. Their network (ARPANET) used packet switching to connect computers together, and a protocol suite called TCP/IP.*

At around the same time, Lefty received an invite to visit the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). The invite has come from Vint Cerf[90], whom he met back his days working at Xerox PARC and whom he stayed in touch with via email. The two were involved in ongoing discussions regarding how the first nationwide and then worldwide network was developing, and when the network would become open to the public. At one point, he requested an invite to come and have a tour. Since he needed to be in Arlington, Virginia for a national COMPUTER CORPS meeting anyway, he would drop in on Vint.

Vint took this opportunity to explain packet switching to him using an analogy.[91]



Vint Cerf (2005 Medal of Freedom recipient)

During his tour, he saw work done by hundreds of people on technologies that influenced many non-military fields, like computer networking and graphical user interfaces for information technology.

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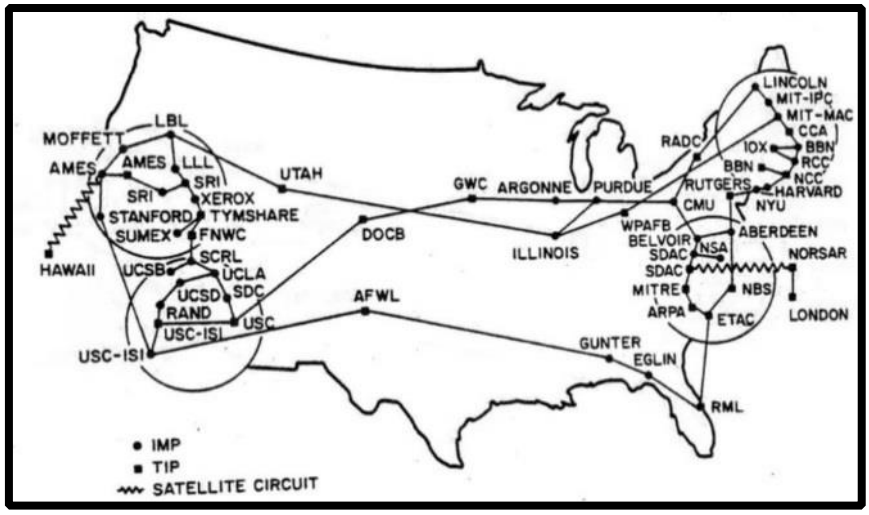
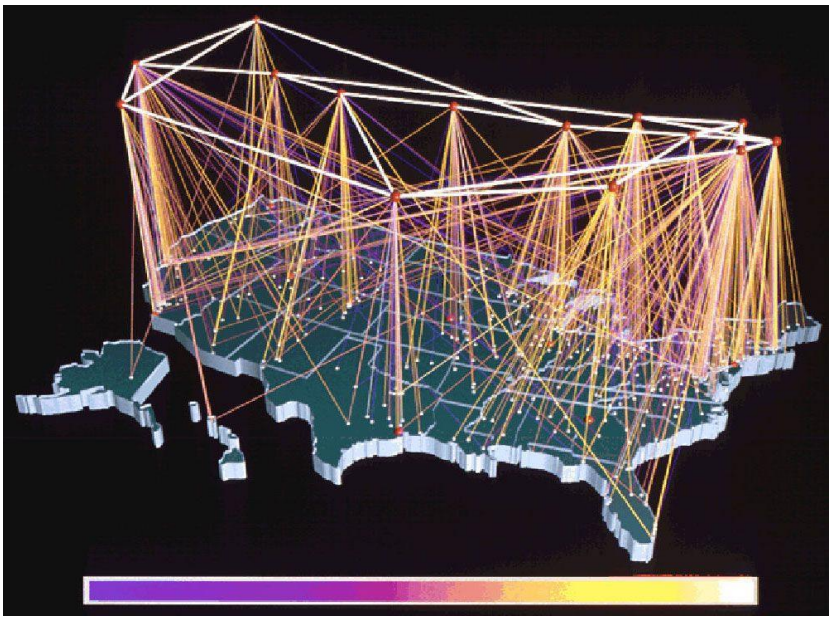
[90] *Vinton Gray Cerf is recognized as one of "the fathers of the Internet," sharing this title with TCP/IP co-inventor Bob Kahn. In the early days, Cerf was a manager for DARPA, which funded various groups to develop TCP/IP.*

[91] *You could compare circuit packet switching to dedicating a piece of interstate highway from Los Angeles to New York. While you're driving your car on it, no one else is allowed on the road until you get to New York, so when you get off somebody else can get on. This is an inefficient use of the available traffic capacity. Packet switching is more like something you see on the road today, where you have lots and lots of cars all sharing this common highway, so you get better use of the capacity of the highway. Packet switching is basically like multiple cars using the same path one right after the other.*



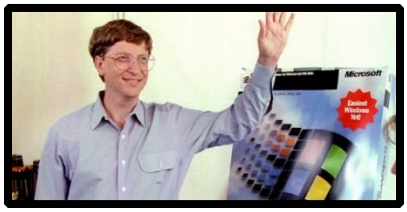
1974 when the Internet was known as the ARPANET

By 1985 the National Science foundation formed the NSFNET, linking five supercomputer centers at Princeton University, Pittsburgh, University of California at San Diego, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Cornell University.



1995 Internet map

Lefty would obtain his first broadband computer connection from an Integrated Services Digital Network line or ISDN, from the local phone company while beta testing Windows 95. As a Win95 beta tester, he got free access to the Microsoft Network (MSN), a walled garden[92], and also a portal to the now public Internet. MSN, created to compete with AOL and CompuServe, was free for one year as part of the testing deal. The MSN network was graphically intensive, and ran slowly over his ISDN 64k connection. Using CompuServe, a text based service; he would download, select, and mark message headers, reconnecting to download the selected messages. The two-step process was necessary to avoid excessive long distance phone call costs.[93]



Gates and Windows 95

ISDN consisted of *two* 64k data channels, which allowed bonding together to create a single 128k connection. He connected one channel to the dial up modem for email, and the other to MSN or the Internet. He did this because Internet Service Providers ISP's, those days doubled the monthly fee to bond the connections at their end. He thought that his setup was pretty cool nonetheless, now able to retrieve and send email while surfing the Web simultaneously in different windows.

He had also experimented with using the Internet before its public availability, dialing a connection to a Seattle company named Spry. Via this toll free number, they in turn connected

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92 A closed platform, walled garden, is a software system wherein the carrier or service provider has control over applications, content, and media, and restricts convenient access to non-approved applications or content. This is in contrast to an open platform, wherein consumers generally have unrestricted access to applications and content. These walled gardens are not unlike the corporate takeover by Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, and others today.

[93] *Many years later, he would use the same "headers only" technique when sending messages via an expensive satellite phone Internet link on the upper deck of a cruise ship sailing the Mosel River in Germany.*

him to the then still immature Internet. A lot of effort and phone calls went into making their TCP/IP stack to work in Windows 3.1 but in time Lefty was able to explore the world of Gopher, Archie, and Veronica, in this plain text online world before the public availability of the World Wide Web.

Later a faster 256k Digital Subscriber Line or DSL connection became available and he ordered one, but kept his ISDN for backup. A good thing he did, because the phone company needed about three months to make his connection work. Of course being a phone company, they tried billing him the entire time regardless. Now with broadband, Lefty could explore the vast Web using the IE browser built into Windows 95 coming from its Plus Pack cdrom.

Windows 95 was initially installed from thirteen diskettes

Back in his home state now for a few years for the first time in twenty plus years, Lefty attended a high school reunion to relive the few good moments he had in high school. He spoke with an old girlfriend, whose books he had carried home in Jr. High. She was married now, with kids, and dogs. Some of his now wife's friends after high school had been his classmates, mostly unknown to him, so she had a good time at the event. People came from long distances, but many of his old car guy (gear head) buddies who were local did not attend to his dismay.

This event cause Lefty to reminisce about these times, and what his life had been in this pre-Army days. His aversion to his high school curriculum had caused him to create his own *independent study* education program consisting of working on cars, reading about cars, racing cars, and watching car races.

Chapter Six, Cars

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Lefty fell in love with cars as a teenager. He also loved baseball, The Beatles, Rock and Roll music in general, and girls. After his family moved from the small town to the city, he discovered his new high school offered no automotive program, no baseball team, no modern music program, and little else of interest to offer him.[94]

Absent the ability to play junior high or senior high school baseball, he played some football. He had developed excellent skills at catching a football, if he could touch a football pass, he would catch it. Not tall or fast enough to be a wide receiver, his coaches designated him as a defensive back. This involved tackling two hundred pound plus running backs and then having like sized offensive and defensive lineman fall on top him during the resulting scrum. He was also to defend the rare forward pass attempt. The game to him lacked any of the classic elegance, and time-honored traditions of baseball, just brutality on a clock.

He was unmotivated and not a particularly good student, at least until later when attending college when he discovered some things of interest to him. In high school, in addition to his general classes, he took a metal shop class, constructed the traditional bird feeder and garden hose rack. He also machined small pieces on a metal lathe, and did some arc welding. He took an electronics class and built a primitive transistor radio that he would use at night in bed under the covers, listening to WLS out of Chicago for rock and roll music, and for late west coast

[94] *Much later, he would use his nonprofit group to install 100 computers in his old high school, and 50 computers in his old junior high school on one Saturday. This was his way of contributing to a more compelling and relevant education for these kids. His group would mobilize a semi-truck load of equipment, and about 20 volunteers to travel the 120 miles, split the group into two teams, install and image the computers in both schools with the school districts software image, and return home in time for dinner. They helped provide a nice surprise when those kids showed up on the following Monday morning for school, to see some tools that would assist them with their education. The local newspaper acclaimed the projects, and the group even made the local TV station newscast.*

baseball games. He signed up for a printing class, at his dad's suggestion, and learned how to set type to setup blocks of type on a printing press by hand. Twenty years later, he would recall this experience when he first set type electronically using desktop publishing software on computers.

A sketchy, musty, dirty, and smelly cigar and magazine store several blocks away became where he bought all the Car Craft, Hot Rod, Motor Trend, or other car magazines he could find each month. These became his high school textbooks, and he read them thoroughly while he listened to Beatles music. He pursued his interest in cars on his own, with the same intensity and single-mindedness that governed the pursuit of everything in which he had an interest.

His dad would not let him drive a car to school, a city block away, until after he graduated high school for fear, perhaps well founded, of him not graduating. He used a 1952 Chevy pickup from his dad's shop, with a six-cylinder engine and a "three on the tree"[95]shifter, on weekends to be able to travel to the racetrack. Each week he saw the stock car races on Saturday nights and the drag races on Sunday mornings. He closely followed one stock car driver in particular who needed to travel a long distance to the race. He became notorious for showing up late, and missing the time trials that determined his starting position. Penalized for this by being placed at the rear of the pack, his charges to the front were epic to the overwhelming cheers of the crowd. He was a tremendous driver and would frequently end up victorious, despite the obvious disadvantage. He was infamous for cutting a hole on his racing helmet to allow him to smoke cigarettes during the yellow caution flag delays.

One Saturday Lefty noticed this racecar at a local hotel and stopped to watch them wrenching on the racecar. The problem was that the dipstick tube was cracked and leaking too much oil to race. Lefty, who then worked at a Ford dealership, convinced the parts manager to open the store to buy a replacement. Many years later, he learned that this driver now in severe physical pain, committed suicide by shotgun at a cemetery, after placing a 911 call saying, "There's gonna be a dead body…It's a suicide."

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95 *"Three on the tree" refers to a three speed manual transmission shifted from the steering column (tree) shift lever.*

He also saw demolition derby races on the figure 8 track, where near misses and tremendous crashes would occasionally occur at the crossover point.

He filled many, many, notebooks with the tips and tricks he learned from the car magazines he read. He continued doing this while he was later overseas in the Army. He was preparing himself to be a racer someday.

As time passed, Lefty decided that his dad *really meant* was he could not drive a car to school, but always pushing the envelope[96], it might be Ok to buy one to work on. He found a 1964 Ford Falcon two door Sprint, black with yellow stripes on the sides, at a local repo company for sale cheap. Missing a transmission and not drivable, he managed to pull the car home into the driveway with the help of some buddies. Meantime however, he rode with his buddies and did lunch hour bleach burnouts on a street outside his high school. Their mothers borrowed bleach applied on the street in front of the rear tires, served to make the tire rubber softer to produce some smoke on spinning, just like the racers.

His engine, built in his parent's basement, was a Ford 289 to replace the old worn out 260 V8 in the Falcon. He bought the engine at a junkyard, stripped it down, and re-bored in an effort to boost the horsepower from the original 195 up to 275. He made sure that the engine block, cylinder heads, and connecting rods were magnetic magnaflux[97] tested for stress cracks. The auto parts store and machine shop were conveniently located a few blocks from his home and directly across the street from the gas station where he worked. He spent most of the money he earned, directly across the street from where he earned it. He also bought performance parts from Carol Shelby, who was a famous race car builder and driver at the time. These parts were

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[96] *He would later see this behavior in his youngest daughter when asking for a cookie and being told no, it was too close to supper time. She would then beg and when he relented to just one, she would ask for one, and one more. This was as if this still sounded close enough to one for her.*

[97] *Magnaflux inspection is a non-destructive testing process for detecting surface and slightly subsurface cracks in ferromagnetic materials. The process involves a magnetic field being applied from an outside source. Ferrous particles are then applied and if an area of flux leakage is present, the particles are attracted to the area to form the indication of a crack. At one point, Lefty built his own device.*

delivered to his house while he attended high school. His mom would give him a look of dismay when he would hand her a wad of hundreds of dollars of cash on his way off to school, asking her to give to the delivery driver when he delivered the packages COD. His engine was mounted on his engine stand down in the basement, but this too would at the end of the day need to move out of his house.

The Falcon

The engine cylinders were bored 0.030 oversize, and he used 13:1 compression domed aluminum pistons with valve cutouts. He initially installed it into the two-door Falcon Sprint body. Later he mounted this engine into a Ranchero, and the finally a Fairlane body. The engine was outfitted with a Holley 780 dual feed, double pumper, four-barrel carburetor mounted onto an aluminum high-rise intake manifold. Outfitted with sodium filled exhaust valves working off the high lift camshaft with molybdenum cam lobes, the high strength double valve springs, and screw-in rocker studs would prevent valve float[98] at the high rpms expected. Teflon valve seals, ported, polished, and shaved cylinder heads with steel shim head gaskets, completed the top end. The cylinder heads topped with Shelby brushed aluminum black and silver valve covers. A Shelby cast aluminum oil pan incorporating a large cooling-finned oil sump, for the bottom end.

He bought red Shelby tuned exhaust headers, a plexiglass cooling fan which would flatten reducing air drag at high engine speeds. In time, the dual exhaust system would have cherry bomb glass pack mufflers and Mustang resonators to provide a

[98] *Valve float is an adverse condition that can occur at high engine speeds when the poppet valves inside an internal combustion engine valve train; do not properly follow the closure phase of the camshaft lobe profile. This reduces engine efficiency and performance. There is also a significant risk of severe engine damage due to valve spring damage and/or pistons contacting the valves.*

sweet engine sound. A trunk mounted Stewart-Warner electric fuel pump ensured a more than adequate fuel supply to the Holley. The ignition system held a high voltage rotor, distributor cap, plug wires and Autolite racing spark plugs.

He completed building the engine inside a rented garage, which was for storage only, but he took this landlord's suggestion loosely. He came close to accidently burned the building down one evening when using a borrowed oxy/acetylene torch. He wanted to remove the rear bumper to be re-chromed but needed to cut the rusted bolts off. The rubber mountings caught fire, but he got it put out right away with no damage to car or garage.

The Ranchero

The Fairlane

A Ford Torino four-speed transmission and clutch with a Hurst aluminum T-handle shifter completed the drive train to a stock 3.53 ratio rear end. Fifteen-inch slicks on black steel rims on the rear, thirteen inch skinny's on slotted chrome wheels for the front, combined with the rear air shocks, gave the car a significantly sexy forward rake. He also mounted traction bars on the rear leaf spring suspension. He installed a huge Ford 100 lb. tractor battery purchased at his dads shop, in the right side of the Falcon's trunk for extra electrical power and traction weight. He used a heavy-duty welding cable from the battery to the starter. It was *Street Legal* in 1971.

One evening he and his best friend Steve traveled a hundred mile south to a large dragstrip to see to the nighttime drag races. At this time, neither of them held drivers licenses, which they called *coupons*, due to their various street racing and speeding mischief. His mom loaned her Cougar for the trip under the impression that Lefty had retained his coupon. Neither of them discouraged this assumption. They saw nitro-fueled funny cars flames shooting out of the engines exhaust pipes, running night drag races at this track for the first time.

Lefty told the following version of a story to his daughter when she reached the legal driving age.

Speedshops

In my teenaged years, us gear heads would migrate to something called Speed Shops to buy our high performance car parts. A guy who ran one of these out of an old barn in the country, acquired the name Fat Al, and he was. We bought brushed aluminum or felt covered T-handles for speed shifting[99] *our cars, hi-rise aluminum intake manifolds, exhaust headers, and bought the high strength connecting rods with 3/8 inch high-tension steel bolts made specifically for high revolutions per minute (RPM) engines.*

My Falcon was missing a transmission, so I bought one at a junkyard that came out of a newer but wrecked Ford Torino. The transmission came complete with a Hurst shifter, but the shifting lever was broken off during the crash. I took this broken part to Fat Al's to buy a replacement lever, but he did not carry one in his inventory and was unable to order one. Al suggested that I send it off to Hurst telling them that I had broken it while speed shifting. I did and they sent me a new one complete with the Hurst linkage. I made out great on that one.[100]

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[99] *Speed shifting is a drag racing technique with a manual transmission where the driver shifts gears as fast as possible to create rapid acceleration of the vehicle. This technique is accomplished by rapid depressing and releasing the clutch pedal during a shift change while holding the accelerator pedal down.*

[100] *Ford as with most Original Equipment Manufacturers or (OEM's) of the day, used cheaper, and bendable factory shift linkage to save money and not the high quality Hurst shift linkage which was required for seamless speed shifting.*

Another speed shop we gear heads frequented was located in a small nearby town. Named Blanchard's, we would go there for speed parts and engine machining services. Blanchard was a dragster racer. A dragster driver also ran another shop, which became one of their hangouts. He and his buddies, would line up at the drag strip on Sunday mornings in the pits behind where they did the burnouts to warm the tires for better traction, and get a smoke and powdered tire rubber bath, and a whiff of the excess nitro fuel from the exhaust of those engines. The cloud of debris would cause them to cough and eyes would tear up, but they thought that this was a cool experience regardless. We gear heads wanted badly to be racers.

Due to the high compression engine in his car, he needed to use Gulf Super No Knox 100 octane gasoline or better yet, the hard to find Sunoco super premium 260, a 104-octane fuel to prevent engine knock. Engine knock or ping, is caused when the combustion of the air/fuel mixture in the engine cylinder does not burn completely in response to its ignition from the spark plug.[101]

The Sunoco pump

The blend selector

No-Nox fuel

[101] *The development of true high-octane gasolines came to a halt (along with the muscle car era) because of the Clean Air Act of 1970; (Nixon strikes again) which required automakers to reduce the pollutant emissions of their engines. The short cut route the carmakers took, rather than extensive engineering work, was to use a catalytic converter, requiring the use of lower octane unleaded gasoline.*

When Lefty married he gave up work on the car, the rented garage, and sold the Falcon body. He kept the engine however as he could not let it go. The Falcon would never cruise the main avenue, which the members of the Street Stocks car club, called "The Ave." They drove a cruising loop to show off their cars through downtown, not unlike the famous Woodard Avenue in the Motor City Detroit, or the Sunset Strip in Hollywood, and probably most main streets around the country in those days.

At times, we would park and just watch the cars go back and forth. They loved the sound of these engines on acceleration, but also appreciated them at idle. The high lift camshafts caused inefficient combustion causing the engines to lope and gallop roughly at low rpms. Occasionally they were offered rides, and Lefty once accepted an awesome ride around the cruising loop in an aluminum bodied Shelby Cobra model with the 289 engine and triple Weber carburetors. Another time he remembered an offered ride in a 375 HP 396 Chevy Super Sport, owned by a rather odd guy who would eat paper napkins on a drunken dare at the pizza place after the bars closed. This short trip ended up in the hedges of a residential home on a back street.

They would occasionally catch a glimpse of a hot blonde woman in a yellow Corvette convertible with a vanity license plate. The teenaged boys thought this translated to, if you can beat me, you can eat me. They never knew anyone to race her, must less beat her.

There were always a lot of hot rod cars around. Camaros, lots of 55 and 57 Chevy's, Mustangs, the occasional Ford Fairlane, or Mercury Cyclone, Plymouth Roadrunners, Dodge Chargers, Corvettes, Olds 442's, Plymouth Barracudas, Dodge Challengers, Pontiac Firebirds and the occasional Shelby Cobra.

His best friend Steve built a 37 Chevy four door sedan housing a souped-up 283 engine. His buddy Tom, had a 55 Chevy where the complete front clip (fenders, hood, and bumper) tipped

forward for ease of servicing, just like James Taylor and Dennis Wilson in the movie Two Lane Blacktop. His buddy Tony owned a powerful silver 1967 Fairlane GT 335 HP 390 engine who frequently played the Young Rascals on the eight-track tape deck. Riding along, he heard this smooth engines powerful sound as foreground to great background Felix Cavaliere keyboard music. His friend Reggie owned a 440 engine Roadrunner, and they attended stock car and drag races both in and out of state. Reggie sometimes allowed him to drive the powerful car. Reggie liked to listen to some great old Neil Diamond music from his eight-track tape deck. This was the car with the funny horn sound. Beep! Beep!

His buddy Danny, Joe, and some other guys built souped-up *Sleeper* cars. These were stock-looking four-door sedans, or odd models of cars like a Ford Maverick to keep the police away from them. The gear heads tuned ears however, would know who they were by the sound of the engines.

Street racing was mostly bluffed or planned here, due to the excessive police attention. A lot of testosterone-fueled bravado also occurred regarding running for pinks,[102] and braggadocios talk of blowing each other's doors off. The most serious street racing happened on a lonely stretch of new four-lane road west of town cut through the farm fields leading out to the airport, late at night. Those without traction bars[103] would request a running start to the race. Lefty remembered one such event where after the race he noticed cords showing through the tire tread on one of his rear slicks. One misplaced stone hitting that spot at high speed and this may have been curtains for the Ranchero, and perhaps him. Luckily, on that day, his guardian angel was able to fly as fast as his car, but this gave him some pause about street racing.[104]

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[102] *Car titles were commonly referred to as pink slips, or pinks.*

[103] *Traction bars are steel bar devices, which clamp on the rear suspension leaf springs to stiffen them and prevent wheel hop. Wheel hop occurs when severe power is sent to the drivetrain causing the tires to lose contact with the pavement, (hopping up and down) thus reducing tire traction.*

[104] *"Auto racing began 5 minutes after the second car was built." - Henry Ford*

They eventually formed a car club, and made plaques to display inside the rear window of their cars. They held meetings to talk about car stuff, and plan trips to drag races, junk yards, car shows, and other sites of interest. They would travel in convoys and would feel that this was indeed cool. The car club plaques unfortunately made them visible targets for the overactive local police force, and the club soon disbanded, as they could not afford to pay the resultant tickets.

When stopped by the police for excessive noise, they would pack steel wool into the tail pipe via a broomstick, drill a hole behind, and put in a small pin. After an inspection down at the police station, they would travel out to the country pull the pin and blow the wad out, until the next time.

The story of how the expensive high performance engine would later find its way into a 64 Falcon Ranchero was simple. Lefty took a job at a Ford dealership outside of town near the racetrack, and one snowy day on the way home some joker crossed the centerline and sideswiped his 50 Ford pickup. The crash crushed the left side of the vehicle and ripped the rear axle right out of its mounts. His truck now totaled, he learned his first and last lesson needed, about insurance companies, as they screwed him on the accident that was not his fault, and he only got a few hundred dollars for a vehicle worth far more.

He bought the Ranchero *as is* from the Ford dealership and shortly after the original engine failed. Those engines used neoprene valve seals would dry up and crack, break into pieces, which would then finally plug the filter screen to the oil pump. Starved for oil, the engine would burn up and seize. He towed the broken truck back to his buddies car shop, which doubled as the family boathouse. He spent the next few days installing his high performance engine. This same engine would later find its way into a 1962 Ford Fairlane 500 two door. Being convinced of, and resigned to his impending death as Nixon's Vietnam cannon fodder, he sold the Fairlane with his engine in the days before reporting to the Army.

In his earlier days of his corporate work years, Lefty drove the rust colored Scout for ten plus years and over 100,000 miles. In the interim he replaced the rusted out rear quarter panels at a high school buddies body shop. A problem with the gauge or coating of the Japanese steel they used, caused them to rust out

prematurely. With a newly installed cassette stereo player and speakers, the Scout looked and sounded new. When gas prices spiked, and his driving distance to work increased, he sold the Scout to a local firefighter, and bought a used and more economical four-wheel drive Jeep Cherokee, four cylinder, four speed.

The Scout was good to him over those years, but once had let him down, at of course the worst possible time. One late Sunday afternoon on the way back from a vacation up north, the engine overheated. Knowing the radiator was getting older and that this was a hot summer, he had taken it to a radiator shop for cleaning inside an acid bath and rodded[105] prior to the trip. In watching the leak now, steam rolling out of the hood and grille on the side of the road, he saw the seam split apart on the upper tank, which made for a horrible leak. No stop-leak gunk would fix this one. He pulled into a gas station off the interstate and the attendant told him that since this was Sunday, no mechanics were on duty and also he would soon be closing. The attendant did not know anything about fixing cars, but was helpful finding a propane torch and some solder inside the shop. They did not find any flux cleaner paste however. Lefty always carried tools, perhaps a throwback to the unreliable cars he owned during his younger days. It then became just a matter of pulling the radiator out, and re-soldering the seam. No flux was available to clean the repair area, and he needed to improvise using a can of available root beer soda from a vending machine. He got it back together and they finally got home a few hours later than expected. The next day he bought a replacement radiator.

Through his business, he would later lease a 92 Cherokee, 96 Grand Cherokee, which he called Black Beauty, a 2000 Grand Cherokee, and a 2004 Commander. He finally bought a 2008 Commander, because the economy had tanked with leases no longer available to him. He liked Jeeps for the winter snows, pulling trailers, for vacations, and of course to haul computers and such.

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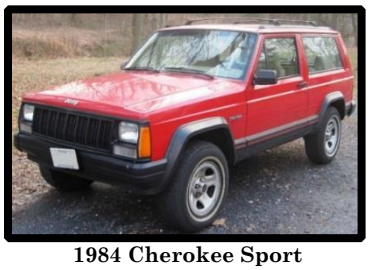
[105] *Rodding a radiator is accomplished by removing the top and bottom tanks. The core is then cleaned by passing a cleaning rod down through the tubes. This is typically done when radiators age and become clogged with rust, scale, and various mineral deposits from the water and antifreeze coolants.*



1984 Cherokee Sport

2000 Grand Cherokee

2008 Jeep Commander

My Growing up, Story Three

My first memories of school are first grade. The sixth child was the first in our family to attend kindergarten. My older brother would deliver her using the homemade double bike down to the end of the road maybe a half mile, to catch the school bus. My brother would always complain because she didn't pedal, but in hindsight, she probably could not reach them. I did this trip a few times as well, on the double bike dad made from cutting apart and welding two old bikes together. Dad would pick these up for cheap from local farmers, we would sand down some old rusty piece of junk, fix it up, pain it, and those became our first bikes. I bought my first new bike as an adult, adding a rear seat to give you rides to the park.

My first grade teacher was a young, tall, and pretty, Franciscan nun named Sister Marie. I knew this even through the long flowing black fabric, a knotted clothesline rope hung at her side, and a white cardboard forehead. Of course, at age six most everyone must have seemed tall. Perhaps I remember her as being especially kind, possibly because the rest of them I experienced later were mean. We jokingly nicknamed them Sister Mary "Nosenseofhumor" or Sister "Pullyouupoutofyourdeskbyyourear", as I recall.

The higher the grade level you advanced at school, the meaner the nuns got, especially to a stubborn, occasionally mischievous, sometimes-clever, left-handed boy. Apparently, the left hand represented some religious

superstition about the devil, and being named for an archangel didn't offset this medieval superstition.

During the fifth grade, I acquired a crush on this longhaired blond girl classmate named Sheila. I thought she was nice and kind of cute, so on Valentine's Day I gave her a Valentine's card. I sweetened the deal, I believe at the suggestion of my Mom, including some small hard candy hearts. These candies were printed with words on them like "Be Mine" "Wink Wink" and "Hug Me." I thought this would let her know I liked her, and of course being too shy to speak with her; I placed the card on her desk when she was away. The idea backfired bigtime, when shortly after receiving the card; she slammed the card down on my desk while walking to the front of the room, sending the candy hearts flying noisily onto the floor. Based on her body language, I knew that this wasn't good;the other boys nonetheless misinterpreted this and did their oohs and aahs, at seeing 'her' giving 'me' a card. "Me and Sheila sitting in a tree, K I S S I N G" they taunted. I later hesitantly opened the card, and saw she wrote that she wasn't ready to 'settle down', just yet. Ouch! Very mature for ten years old, but yet shocking and perhaps even a bit cruel. I took this to mean my feelings weren't exactly mutual.

Our small school was only four classrooms, a convent built on one end where the nuns stayed, and a small library. Two grades inside each classroom made Sister Marie my second grade teacher as well. The library is the place the

nuns in later years would beat me using a yardstick across my butt, when for whatever reason I didn't, or wouldn't, meet their expectations of me. I would commonly laugh at this, as my mom and dad beat me much harder using a thick wooden paddle at home. These mean nuns would tell me unless I cried, I wouldn't be allowed back into the classroom. They apparently wanted the other children to be mindful of the effects of their sadistic pain infliction attempts. I guess fear ruled the day, as they tried to beat out the clever and creative out of the boys. I would use the sink in there to put water around my eyes, to make them happy.

In the early grades, we read the Dick and Jane books, which read, "see Spot run, run Spot run." We used big red mechanical pencils learning to write cursive letters on lined paper copying the letter charts hung up on the room's walls. I ate lunches from a home-packed cowboy-themed metal lunch box, which included a small thermos, if I hadn't dropped and broken it. I would at times buy milk at school in small cartons, one cent for white, and two cents for chocolate, if I could talk my mom into the extra penny.

During morning, lunch, and afternoon recesses in the spring and fall, we played marbles. I came to school with a cloth marble bag full of regular marbles, and a few precious and hard won Purees and Steelies. We played on the paved parking lot through the water puddles and mud. In the winters, we would sled down the big hill next to the school on our store-bought and homemade snow sleds, which we

would bring along in our station wagon each day. We would attempt to make all the way down the hill to a culvert, which ran under the highway. We would sled for the whole hour after lunch from the top of this hill. This was also near the place where I used to clap erasers to remove the chalk dust after school, whenever I was assigned this punishment. I didn't mind detention duty because I got to be outside, and watch the many cars and trucks travel the highway and imagining their origins and destinations.

My best friend Gerry was a hilarious and mischievous kid, which is what I liked most about him. Partners in crime, we would continuously get into trouble from pulling various pranks. We created a little ditty we used to sing or hum when we saw the janitor sweeping the hallways, into small piles of dirt. "Don't step in the dirt, or you'll get hurt by Albert." We were actively discouraged from doing this, but with him egging me on, we were quite a pair. Gerry had this wonderful ability to crack me up with some kind of mischief and with the uncanny ability to pull a straight face, often leaving me to face the blame. This became less funny when he did this when we served as altar boys in a quiet church for many hours during Lent. I lost touch with him over the years, but heard he took over the contractor business from his dad and uncle, and formed a bluegrass band having become reasonably talented at that.

At school, we played king of the mountain atop the snow piles despite how rough a game this was, bloody lips and

bruises being common occurrences. We would build snow forts on the land next to the school and church parking lot, and lob premade snowballs at each other in the other forts, not unlike fighting a war between two ancient castles. The older kids always acted mean to the younger ones at recess. One time we dug a trench through the snow from a huge water puddle in the parking lot to fight back. The puddle drained down the hill into the snow fort these older kids built, totally flooding the fort with water that froze into ice overnight. I can still laugh about that one today, they were hopping mad but never figured out that we had done this.

Dad did plumbing and electrical work, but mainly installed milking equipment in dairy barns and also repaired them. During that time, the kids all still young, dad also fixed small engines inside the old barn behind the house in the evenings. My brother and I would sometimes clean engine parts for him using gasoline in a pail. On occasion, he would send me down to Sheila's house, at the end of the road and across the railroad tracks with some lawn mower blades to have her dad sharpen them, which was his side business. My brother and I would "test" the heck out of go-carts when dad fixed one.

In his shop, he posted a sign up on the wall that read, Our Credit Manager is Miss Helen Waite, so if you want credit go to…

I would later soften the credit policy in my own businesses by telling customers that I had a prior

agreement with my bank. In exchange for them agreeing not to sell computers, I had agreed not to provide personal loans. Not everyone thought it to be as humorous as I did.

Dad also played drums in a Polka band on weekends. I played his drums sometimes when we moved to the big city, as he no longer used them. Later while attending high school, I joined the school marching band. I held the desire, but lacked the rhythm and patience to drum repetitive paradiddles on a rubber mat to learn. I also tried playing acoustic guitar, but I demonstrated no patience for something like this until I was in my thirties when I forced myself to sit down and teach myself to touch-type on a computer keyboard. Dad worked three jobs to support us kids. This is also probably, why I thought I could run two businesses while also serving on the school board etc.

Many years later, I took some old 78-rpm records his polka band made at a Milwaukee recording studio in the 1950s, and digitized and transferred them onto cd's for my dad and the other band members to enjoy. Unfortunately, the cost of audio editing software those days was prohibitive, and I wasn't able to effectively edit out the snap, crackle, and pop of these early recordings. These noises did make them sound authentic however. Love, Dad

To be continued…

Chapter Seven Baseball

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Lefty fell in love with baseball as a boy, then as a teenager cars, The Beatles, Rock and Roll music in general, and girls. He still loved baseball. Much later now he still enjoyed many ballgames at County Stadium and at his beloved Wrigley Field, especially later when he lived nearby. Here, home run balls could be found in the gloves of the kids patrolling Waveland and Sheffield avenues. Sometimes these balls visited the Juniper bushes in the centerfield batters eye, or were caught by one of the bleacher bums. In this ballpark, doubles frequently bounced off, or were eaten by the Ivy covered brick walls. He took his daughter to Wrigley beginning at age two, when her stage of potty training resulted in trips to a sketchy men's room with a little girl, and many false alarms. He once caught a "fan-applauding"[106] ricochet foul ball at County Stadium off the bat of then future Hall of Famer Paul Molitor, thrown by future Hall of Fame pitcher Roger Clemens. Clemens, a hard thrower, reminded him of his earlier self on the mound. He owned the full seventeen inches of home plate, hitters could crowd it at their own risk. Clemens would knock these batters down, including later his own rookie son reportedly "to give him a different view of the ball."

When the Brewers were moved from the American League into the National League, in his view this shameful thing should not have ever been allowed, it caused him to stop following the Brewers. The former team owner and then Commissioner, was on Lefty's permanent shit list next to the war criminals Nixon[107]

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[106] *This ball hit a concrete stair behind them and ricocheted back forward. He reached behind his buddy Randy in the aisle seat, and snatched it out of midair as it sped back towards the field. Normally he would have given the ball to a kid, as it is a good modern tradition, but his daughter had pleaded, "Daddy catch me a ball" as he had left home for the game.*

[107] *"You call them in. Good. Good deal. Play it tough. That's the way they play it and that's the way we are going to play it." Nixon on telling deputy CIA director Vernon Walters to call the current head of the FBI Patrick Gray to get him to back off on the Watergate burglary and cover-up investigation.*

and Kissinger.[108] This giveaway of public property and resultant tearing down of the 1950's vintage County Stadium building and the giveaway of the surrounding land was a shameful abuse of taxpayer money. As is the public tax imposed to pay for the ugliest and worst ballpark in the league, by common consensus. Lefty now followed his loveable but losing two time World Champion Cubs on the NL senior circuit from the mid-seventies and now the NY Yankees from the AL junior league.

He wrote the following in an email to his older brother, who was the catching half of their Little League battery that would propel them through multiple tournament playoff games and eventually to a championship game against a much larger city.

Yankee stadium

On my birthday, recently separated from my wife of 25 years, dad dying of cancer, sad and a bit lonely, I flew to NYC out of Milwaukee on a Saturday afternoon on a Midwest[109] *nonstop flight. That evening I visited the John Lennon Strawberry Fields memorial in Central Park. I was also able to have a long conversation with the doorman at the Dakota Apartments, where the Lennon's lived. I watched the Yankees play the next day before going back for work on Monday.*

I arrived at the ballpark early to join a group tour of the center field monuments, as you know called Monument Park. By the time I found the tour, the tour guide prevented me from joining the line, as I had arrived minutes late

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[108] *"The illegal we do immediately; the unconstitutional takes a little longer." Henry Kissinger's quote released by WikiLeaks from a March 10, 1975 meeting with Turkish foreign minister Melih Esenbel in Ankara, Turkey.*

[109] *This was in the days before yet another corporate merger, and they had two across leather seating and served free warm chocolate chips cookies.*

according to him. I pleaded my case of being from out of town, but big city manners prevailed and I was denied entrance. I supposed in that moment, I felt a little like Clark Griswold.[110]

Consoling myself with a beer and hot dog, after a wait for a NY prohibition of not selling beer before noon, I had an upper deck seat so high that a ballgame was not much more than a rumor. I did however notice the Yankee stadium 26-championship flags flying above the stadium, of course there are 27 now, and I watched Derek Jeter and the Yankees win. Grandpa had told us about Babe Ruth, Dad about Mickey Mantle, but little did I know at the time that I would be able to see the great Derek Jeter play the game we both loved. He played it so well, and for so long.

The Yankees, used the slightly *tired* tradition playing a recording of Kate Smith's God Bless America during the seventh inning stretch and a great but now well-worn tradition playing Sinatra's "My Way" when they won and Lisa Minelli's version when they lost. The Yankees also have their own great traditions. The Yankee Stadium Section 203 right field bleacher fans have something called, the Roll Call. At the top of the first inning, as the Yankee players take the field, and their starting pitcher is warming up on the mound, everyone seated in this section stands and claps their hands. These so called *Bleacher Creatures* then chant the name of each starting fielder in unison until the player acknowledges the crowd, even if this takes several minutes. The Creatures verbally move through the lineup, from the center fielder to the left fielder, right fielder,

[110] *From the comedy film Vacation, which follows the Clark Griswold family as they take a long disastrous and hilarious cross-country trip to the theme park Walley World, only to arrive and find it closed for maintenance.*

first baseman, second baseman, shortstop and third baseman in that order. The repeated chants would be *Der ek Je ter*, and so on. With few exceptions, the pitcher and the catcher are busy with warmup pitches and are not part of the roll calls.

At Yankee stadium, they also have a somewhat annoying tradition of playing a whistle sound after each opponent strikeout. One electronics company who is a sponsor, uses this whistle as their company jingle.

Old Yankee Stadium Street view

The view from Section 203

The Brewers dropped from his radar; he never watched them again, except when they played the Cubs or the Pirates. The Pittsburgh Pirates were after all Lefty's boyhood hero Roberto Clemente's team, who played at the Three Rivers ballpark.[111] They now had an outstanding homegrown player named Neil Walker, since traded to the NY Mets, and later to the Brewers

[111] *As a result, Lefty chose Pittsburg for a fifth grade school report and learning a new vocabulary word, confluence. The city of Pittsburg was after all built at the confluence of three rivers, the Allegheny, the Monongahela and the Ohio.*

and then the Marlins. Lefty wore his Clemente number 21 jersey to the game. When he got static from hometown fans, he would say, "Look at the number, read the name, and shut up." Clemente was a hero to anyone who called himself a baseball fan, he believed. One time at a game, he managed to call the rookie Walker over to the stands during batting practice and requested that he play more like Clemente. "I'll try," he offered. Walker knew of Clemente because his dad was a friend and just missed being on the fateful flight which crashed into the ocean. Lefty wore a Cubs shirt and a Yankee hat to Wrigley when they played each other in interleague games. Other fans thought him confused, but he told them he was just a "baseball" fan.

He also watched Braves baseball as they played on television frequently because of Ted Turner's superstation. He was fortunate to see some of the best pitching in baseball history watching Maddox, Glavine, and Smoltz on the mound for fourteen straight division titles throughout the nineties, and into the 21st century. The threesome would collectively win in excess of 800 games in their careers.

In it's opening year, Lefty and his older brother made a road trip to visit the newest version of Busch stadium in St. Louis. He was dismayed to see the brick wall behind home plate was fake, unlike the real bricks at Wrigley. The new stadium unusually devoid of the signs of a great team history did have some old scoreboards displayed inside the concourse area. These old scoreboards depicted what they was displayed at the end of the last game in Old Busch Stadium complete with teams and scores. After a well-played and competitive game, the Cubs of course lost on a walk off grand slam homerun.

Busch Stadium concourse area scoreboard

Wrigley Field

The Chicago Cubs have a great tradition singing "Take me out to the Ballgame." during the 7th inning stretch, as opposed to the lame tradition of the Brewers Sausage Races and singing the Beer Barrel Polka. The Cubs long time play-by-play announcer Harry Cary has since passed away, but they have continued this grand tradition using guest conductors to sing and video replays of Harry on the new left field video screen.

Harry Cary singing during the seventh inning stretch

More recently, the Cub fans also created the tradition of singing "Go Cubs Go!" end of a winning game. During each of the past two seasons, the Cubs sent their fans out of their seats and back home singing, more than fifty times. Then a few more times during the post-season playoffs and in one World Series game. There is also a tradition of throwing home run balls hit by the other team back into the outfield and if you didn't, the bleacher bums would relentlessly chant "throw it back, throw it back" until you did.

The origins of this are said to have started in the 1970's during a game between the Cubs and the Atlanta Braves at Wrigley Field. It is said that the Hall of Famer Hank Aaron hit a home run into the bleachers in a 14-3 Braves loss. The Braves fan that caught it sought to return it to Aaron after the game but Aaron wanted nothing to do with the ball since the team lost the game. Unbelievably the very next day the same fan caught another Aaron home run ball in the bleachers off the bat of Aaron. This time however knowing that Aaron would not want the ball, he through it back onto the field. This then became adopted as a tradition at Wrigley field that continues to this day.

Rumor holds that some bleacher ticket holders bring along an old ball along to throw back, just in case they caught one. This is ironic as Wrigley was the first place, which finally allowed fans to keep balls hit into the seats sometime in the early 1900's.[112] *Prior to this time, the game would be stopped until the ball was retrieved. This was not unlike playing Home Run Derby as a kid, Lefty thought.* [113]

The newest tradition involves dancing bullpen pitchers. Now when the Cubs hit a home run, the relief pitchers all dance in the enclosed pen and the video is displayed on the left field video board for the crowd to enjoy. The video board

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[112] *On average, at least twelve dozen balls are now used per game, from the 2.4 million hand assembled a single factory in Costa Rica each year. The average use of a new baseball in an MLB game is now 5-7 pitches.*

[113] *During the time, the Cubs were owned by the Spaulding family, who just happened to be in the business of producing baseballs, among other sports gear.*

is also a newer addition. The newest renovations to the Wrigley ballpark moved the bullpens from foul territory along the first and third base lines to under the outfield bleachers. This is a replacement for the previous macho gone awry show by the bullpen pitchers. They would challenge each other to be the last to move when a foul ball line drive or ground ball came screaming into the bull pen.

Another new Cub player antic, is the mock interviews in the dugouts by other players after home run balls. These are completed with fake microphones and air cameras.

His Cubs were recently playing better than ever, the best in the forty years plus years he watched and rooted for them. They had made some good choices in the player draft. The brought in some veteran free agents to fill out the team.

The Cubs brought in a new veteran manager to shape the team. He had some Maddonisms, a flashback to the previous century's Yogisms, and some were eventually made into t-shirts to raise money for the Cubs charities.

This dynamic brought back hundred-year-old stories of the better times during the 1907 and 1908 World Series championship seasons.

Baseball's Sad Lexicon
These are the saddest of possible words
Tinker to Evers to Chance[114]
Trio of bear cubs, and fleeter than birds
Tinker, Evers, and Chance
Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon[115] *bubble*
Making a (NY) Giant hit into a double (play)
Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble
Tinker to Evers to Chance
Franklin Pierce Adams

Then in November, the 108-year curse of the goat[116] *was finally broken, and the Cubs won the World Series coming back from trailing 3-1 in the seven game series. The game seven finale was a 4-hour, 28-minute thriller and epic battle against the Cleveland Indians complete with lead changes, a rain delay*[117]*, and an extra inning. In typical Cubs fashion, they made us all wait. In the end, all that*

[114] *After a 1905 fistfight, Tinker and Evers would never speak again even while continuing as teammates for the Cubs for the next ten years through four pennant titles. Frank Chance would later manage the Cubs.*
[115] *Gonfalon: a banner suspended on a crossbar. Today called a pennant flag.*
[116] *The Curse of the Billy Goat was supposedly placed on the Chicago Cubs baseball franchise in 1945 by the Billy Goat Tavern owner. Because the foul odor of his pet goat Murphy was bothering other fans, he was asked to leave Wrigley Field, during the 1945 World Series. Outraged, he allegedly declared, "Them Cubs, they ain't gonna win no more," which has been later interpreted to mean that they would never again win a World Series.*
[117] *An adhoc team meeting was called during the rain delay, where the veteran player encouraged teammates hit the reset button, and that they were good enough to go out and win this thing. After the game, the players all agreed this meeting was critical to their eventual win.*

was needed was a 17-minute rain delay to wash away a 108-year championship drought. There are also exactly 108 stitches in a baseball, and match the 108 diamonds mounted on the Cubs World Series player rings.

This game was thought by many, including the baseball commissioner and the Cubs president Theo Epstein, to be the one of the best World Series baseball games ever played.[118] *The first extra-inning game seven win since the Pirates Bill Mazeroski's walk off homer beat the Yankees in 1960. Loveable losers no more, they became World Champions and my 42 year wait as a fan was finally over.*

No one thought this could ever happen

Lefty continued to write stories to his second daughter without any acknowledgement, recognition, or appreciation. Despite this, he decided to send off additional stories. With all that was going on in his life, this was therapeutic for him and hopefully beneficial to her as she was starting a family of her own.

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[118] *"Look, I think we just saw one of the great World Series of all-time," Commissioner Rob Manfred opined. "It's got to be a top three game of all time," General Mgr. Theo Epstein bragged. "Everyone's prone to hyperbole at moments like this, but I think it really was. It felt like it. I died like six times. It was pretty remarkable."*

My Growing up, Story Four

I have no memories of third grade, which is a bit odd, because after learning how to read and write in the earlier grades, it should have been fun. However, I guess it wasn't memorable, even though I changed classrooms and teachers. I do remember having a lay teacher rather than a nun for fourth grade, and my struggle mastering math multiplication. Your grandma worked with me to get that figured out, eventually making a multiplication table for drills. I never did enjoy nor was good at doing math. I also needed to learn some Latin to be an altar boy, which was expected of fourth grade boys. It was difficult to memorize a dead foreign language especially when unable to know what any of it meant. I did have some facility with languages, which carried on into adult life. I take some credit for your abilities in this area.

At age nine, I played league baseball for a Peewee league. Mom's brother became one of the coaches and at the first practice; I was worried about getting the chance to play right field, like my hero Roberto Clemente. I planted myself out in right field, catching fly balls, showing off my glove, range, fly ball judgement and arm strength, all of which I was proud of. I threw the ball accurately to home plate on the fly, and displayed how well I tracked and caught fly balls. My brother became the catcher, and wore that protective gear now commonly referred to by baseball players as the tools of ignorance. He was made the catcher

partly because he was older and perhaps a little tougher, or because he was shorter and stockier. As we rode our bikes home later, my brother explained that our uncle told him that he was tasked to working with me to learn pitching. I was completely blown away, because this was something I never even considered. We worked together, and my brother showed a great deal of patience with me, as I didn't yet throw accurately at short distances like the 45 feet from the pitching mound to home plate.

We practiced in front of the old barn behind the house for a backstop, which took a beating. After a lot of arguing about who would go get the wild pitches "you go get it you threw it, yeah but you missed it." Eventually we worked that out. We also broke a few windows in those days, especially one huge one at the car garage behind a field next to our house. We would play baseball wherever we could, our house, friends' houses, or up at the ball diamond behind Gerry's house.

On Saturday afternoons, friends would come over to watch the baseball Game of the Week on our small black and white console TV. As this could get rather boring for young boys, we kept this interesting by playing out the game on the floor in front of the TV. We pulled out the baseball cards of the players in the game from shoeboxes stuffed full, arranging them according to their correct field positions. These cards came with the purchase of bubble gum, and they still smelled of the sweet gum much later.

A local pair of brothers about the same age would come over to the house to play. The two brothers also a year apart in age, lived up the hill where their dad owned a Supper Club and dance hall. The hall also served as a roller-skating rink, where I first roller-skated to "I Saw Her Standing There." Billy and Larry would come over to play as they lived nearby. We always found a way to play a ballgame.

"This here is Larry," so named by my mom because when he would call on the phone it is what he would say first. He would also bring his younger brother. His dad, a heavily accented Hollander, worked at the local chicken hatchery when he wasn't frequenting the local bars. He would end up as one of my baseball coaches before dying relatively young. Larry would later be the one that brought over and played a copy of "I Want to Hold Your Hand" on our record player with the penny scotch-taped on the tone arm to stop skipping. This first introduction to the Beatles would forever influence my life.

Our friends soon discovered our center town training camp, at the middle level elevation nearer the lake, was much cooler during the summer than up the hill where they lived. That great old Lake Michigan, which made a child awestruck to see, helped to air condition our baseball camp. That same lake where the crabby old lady would chase us with a broom from "her" beach in front of her house when we tried to swim there. This was the same lake, ordinarily

too cold to swim in comfortably until August, and sometimes too polluted with the Edelweiss fish, dead and decaying along the shoreline.

My brother and I being "Irish twins" a year plus two days apart, practiced at home frequently. Friends who rode their bikes down the big hill would likely find at least two more players for a baseball team. Using new rules like right field out, the use of ghosts for base runners, or everlasting pitcher where the same pitcher would throw to both teams, a ball game could always be organized. A baseball bat tossed vertically, caught, and alternating hand over hand up the handle, would determine which team hit first.

On the other side of our spring, training camp sat a tavern parking lot, and an old low roofed chicken coop. This provided a convenient place to practice pretend parachute jump landings, "bend your knees, and roll," after watching a Combat episode or some war movie on TV.

At the rear of the lot next door was the back end of the Ford car dealer who I learned by inquiring, after seeing an advertisement on TV, didn't participate in the national Punt, Pass, and Kick contest. Old Ernie must have sensed my disappointment when I questioned him, and rewarded my boyhood naivety with a brand new model car. It wasn't the cheap plastic flimsy kind from a "you-build-it kit", but a real metal model, I suppose given to the dealers as publicity for the new car line. It was a 1962 Ford Fairlane 500, and I enjoyed this toy for a long time.

In those days, we would pick up mail at the post office building from a box which used a combination lock and a hard to remember combination. I occasionally needed to ask the post office person for the mail, when I couldn't get into it. Occasionally the lady at bar next door to our house would ask me to pick up her mail as I walked past, and she would reward me with a huge "Big Time" candy bar for my effort. Only worth a nickel back then, but a big treat for me nonetheless.

Down the road and across the RR tracks from our house was a vegetable canning factory. We would see the Mexican migrant workers walk past our house on their way to and from work there. Told not to talk to them because they carried knives, but we did anyway because they were nice and learned to count in Spanish among other things.

Another thing we liked doing in the summer was to ride our bikes around town searching out the canning factory trucks parked somewhere, a tavern or wherever. We would steal pea vines off the back of the truck, load them into our bike baskets, and then hightail it back home as if we pulled off some great caper. We would sit cross-legged outside on the lawn to shuck'em and eat'em. They are delicious when fresh out of the field and raw, especially the smaller ones.
Love, Dad

To be continued…

Chapter Eight, Monopoly

C:\novel\chap8\type monopoly.txt ↵

At some point, Lefty received an invite and a backstage pass to the Windows 98 introduction being held in the Arie Crown Theater at McCormick Place in Chicago, from his old friend Bill. There he saw Gates introduce the newest version of Windows, Windows 98, and crash it "live" on the giant screens. The resultant blue screen was due to trying to connect a document scanner, to demonstrate the latest Plug and Play technology.[119] This connection occurred without shutting the computer off and the nascent technology feature would soon be renamed by many computer geeks to "Plug and Pray".

The newspapers reported the event.

> *"At a Spring Comdex demo of Windows 98 on Monday in Chicago, Bill Gates the world's richest man, was demonstrating Windows 98 to a packed house and overflow rooms when plugging in a usb scanner sent its dire death message onto huge monitors for all to see. (a BSOD or Blue Screen of Death) As Microsoft product manager Chris Capossela quickly moved to remove the offensive message from the screens, by switching over to another computer, Gates quipped, "This must be why we're not shipping Windows 98 yet." Until the crash, the demos had created some applause and positive murmuring from the crowd."*

[119] *In personal computers, a plug and play device is one with that facilitates the discovery of new hardware components in a computer system without the need for physical device configuration or user intervention in resolving any resource conflicts. Plug and play devices can be Universal Serial Bus or USB, and FireWire cable connected.*

Windows 98 introduced support for many new hardware devices and introduced a method where the operating system software could be *voluntarily* updated with something called Windows Update.

The trade press reviews were generally good.

> ***Windows 98 Review by Paul Thurrott***
> *Windows 98 has arrived and will quickly become Microsoft's operating system volume leader, surpassing the sales of Windows 95 during a similar timeframe in its life-cycle. Though Windows 98 isn't a major upgrade to Windows 95, it fixed virtually every problem with its predecessor while adding a host of new features that make it a compelling upgrade for almost any Windows user.*

The Windows 98 Second Edition (SE) was first released in 1999. It included fixes for many minor issues, improved WDM audio and modem support, improved USB support, and the replacement of Internet Explorer 4.0 with Internet Explorer 5.0. This version was then later succeeded by the Windows Millennial Edition or ME, in 2000.

Pentium II processor
Image Courtesy: Intel.com

Image Courtesy: Microsoft.com

Years later, shortly after the events of September 11, 2001 in New York city, Microsoft hosted a Windows XP launch event in the city. Bill Gates onstage explained that many people have asked him about what ever happened to the person who plugged in the scanner and crashed Windows 98 years earlier on live TV. Does he still work for the company; is he still among us? Gates then brought him up on stage, introduced him as Chris Capossela, explaining he still worked for MS, as he plugged a scanner into the Windows XP demonstration computer. This time it worked flawlessly, and received enthusiastic applause from the gathered crowd.

Bill Gates and Windows XP

Pentium III processor

Image Courtesy: Intel.com

At around this same time Lefty ran into an old acquaintance from PARC, Bob Metcalfe, at one of the many computer shows which they both attended. Over lunch, Bob told him an old story from his MIT days and about the trials and tribulations of co-inventing Ethernet.[120]

> *"I came to work one day at MIT and the computer had been stolen so I called DEC to break the news to them that this $30,000 computer that they'd lent me was gone. They thought this was the greatest thing that ever happened because it turns out I had in my possession the first computer ever small enough to be stolen!"*

Of course Lefty told a story to Bob, which he had been told sometime earlier by Vint Cerf.

> *In the World Wide Web's first generation, Tim Berners-Lee*[121] *launched the ideas of the URL, HTTP, and HTML. A few people noticed that the Web might be better than Gopher. In the second generation, Marc Andreessen and Eric Bina developed the NCSA Mosaic web browser at the University of Illinois. Several million people then suddenly noticed the Web might be better than sex. In the third generation, Andreessen and Bina left NCSA to found Netscape and gave the browser away for free, and now hundreds of millions of people are using it and its descendants.*

Marc Andreessen, born and raised in Lefty's home state of Wisconsin, received his bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He also worked at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the university, where he became familiar with Tim Berners-Lee's open standards for the World Wide Web.

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[120] *Ethernet is a computer networking technology commonly used to connect computers to each other in local area networks (LANs), metropolitan area networks (MANs), and wide area networks (WANs).*

[121] *Later on the 25th anniversary of the web Tim Berners Lee when questioned Edward Snowden, Hero or villain? Replied, "The whistleblower may be all that saves our society."*

Andreessen and co-worker Eric Bina working at the university under National Science Foundation or NSF funding, champione3d by then Senator Al Gore. They created a user-friendly Internet web browser which worked on a wide range of computers. That computer code became the Mosaic Web browser, and the basic code for other browsers including the code licensed from Spyglass Mosaic for Internet Explorer.

Marc Andreessen and Eric Bina

The next years brought additional software beta testing for Lefty including the Window Vista Community Technology Preview (CTP). This came as an email invitation from MS.

> *The Windows Vista CTPs are designed to involve customers and partners in the early stages of Windows Vista development by facilitating timely and relevant feedback. This feedback will help Microsoft Corp. deliver the highest-quality product possible. The October CTP will be distributed to beta testers via the Windows Vista Technical Beta Program, as well as to subscribers of the Microsoft® Developer Network (MSDN®) and Microsoft TechNet — more than a half million users overall. Given the nature of the software development and the feedback process, many of the October CTP features are still works in progress and will evolve over the remainder of the development cycle.*
>
> *As with Windows Vista Beta 1 and the September CTP, the October CTP is intended for the use of developers, IT professionals and the technical community. End users interested in testing pre-release versions of Windows*

Vista should continue to wait until the availability of Beta 2.

Many of the features included in the October CTP are still being developed and do not yet represent their final functionality or design. Some of the features in the October CTP that will undergo significant changes before the final version of Windows Vista ships include the new Migration Wizard, Power Management Center and settings, Windows Antispyware, Windows Calendar, and Windows Media® Player 11. While these features are evident in the October CTP, all are in the early stages of development and will continue to evolve throughout the development process. Microsoft plans to release more information about these features once they are further along in the development life cycle.

Most messages generated by the testers on the Windows Vista blog involved questions about graphic cards, audio cards, and hardware drivers. Problems existed using rich media, like audio and video playback, and questions about memory upgrades, and problems with the Media player and the Media Center application. They complained of problems upgrading from Windows XP, and many problems involving faxing, scanners, and printers.

They were discouraged by the continued broken promises from Microsoft.

WinInsider
News for Microsoftonians
Blackcomb Pushed Back, Longhorn on Deck

Late Tuesday, Microsoft verified reports that it has pushed back the company's expected successor to Windows XP, code-named Blackcomb, and will develop an intermediate release called "Longhorn." Microsoft intends Blackcomb to be a major Windows release with full .NET user experience and integration with various Web services. And although Microsoft still plans to develop Blackcomb, the company now realizes that it can't hit the original late 2002 release date for such an ambitious product. So Longhorn will fill that gap, with an expected release in late 2002 or early 2003. Blackcomb will follow in 2003 or 2004.

At this point, Lefty continued building custom computers for his customers, now with the Pentium 4 processors. The processor naming convention was now changed from Roman numerals to Arabic numbers.

Pentium 4 processor
Image Courtesy: Intel.com

Overall, there was little disparagement of the Vista operating system, lots of praise for the Aero Glass interface appearance, and many questions regarding what was changed, plus workarounds for various problems.

One thread, which would accumulate near a half million views, regarded access to user files.

> ***Access denied to the "My Documents and Settings" folder***
>
> *Question | This question is answered | 429039 views | 101 Helpful votes | 131 replies*
>
> *Marilyn-- replied on December 16, 2008*
>
> *In reply to Tek101's post on December 16, 2008*
>
> *Hello Tek101,*
>
> *Thank you for posting your question about the "My Documents" folder. I want to make sure that you understand why you no longer have access to these folders even when you are an administrator. These folders are not accessible by anyone as they are there only used as a placeholder.*

Now the previous "My Documents" is simply called Documents. It is just like the old "My Documents" but it does not contain folders for pictures and music. Those folders are stored outside the folder structure of Documents and are a folder themselves at the same hierarchal level as Documents.

You still see the old "My Documents" folder that was used in Windows XP and other operating systems. As I stated before it is only there for backward compatibility for other programs that used the "My Documents" folder structure. ***Vista silently redirects any program to now go to the Documents folder instead of "My Documents".*** *This also goes for "My Pictures" and "My Music". If you look closely at the icon it shows as a shortcut icon.*

Please post again if you have any other questions.

Marilyn

Microsoft Answers Support Engineer

Visit our Microsoft Answers Feedback Forum and let us know what you think.

There was complaining regarding the amount of hard disk space Vista used.

WinSxs Folder consuming enormous disk space

Question | This question is answered | 158327 views | 85 Helpful votes | 43 replies

Asked December 24, 2008 by Hrishi Rao

Brian-- replied on December 24, 2008

Hi Hrishi,

I've attached a link below that explains the purpose of the WinSxs folder:

"If an isolated application specifies an assembly dependency, side-by-side first searches for the assembly among the shared assemblies in the WinSxs folder. If the required assembly is not found, side-by-side then searches for a private assembly installed in a folder of the application's directory structure."

Graeme_UK replied on August 3, 2008

In reply to Brian--'s post on December 24, 2007

Explaining the purpose doesn't help my disappearing hard disk space

Please can you tell me what Microsoft's Official Procedure is to move all partitions of an existing installation on a laptop to a new drive. If I buy a bigger hard drive, can you tell me how to copy the hidden partition on to a new larger drive. Will vista see the larger hard drive as a significant hardware variation over the original laptop spec and invalidate itself?

Alanthus replied on August 3, 2008

In reply to hoenir's post on July 28, 2008

Based on this and other posts warning about relocating or removing the winsxs folder I will be recommending to users with this issue to get a new computer or get a much bigger HDD to reinstall VISTA on in order to actually be able to use the hardware they currently own. Judging from our sales agent computers a regular winsxs folder is now running anywhere between 10-15GB on a machine that hasn't installed more than a few pieces of software (on mine it was 27GB, it's now running Linux, writing this on a Windows 7 machine that I hope will remain viable for longer than the VISTA machines).

If someone has a way to trim this folder that actually works (most of our agents are on SP2, the tool above does nothing, but then it didn't work on the SP1 machine I tried it on either.) I would very much appreciate it, paying for a new machine or new HDD + system reinstall because of a "feature" gone haywire isn't making my managers or our agents happy at all.

On a previous bitter cold day in January 2007, Lefty had traveled to New York City for the Windows Vista operating system reveal. He requested, and his old friend Bill had sent him a backstage pass for the event. Many unfortunate attendees lined up outside braving the cold, to wait for hours. Observing this line coming into the building, he mentioned this to Bill and they were promptly let inside early to stay warm. Soon Bill Gates walked out onto the stage.

> *"Well, it all started 24 years ago in NYC, Microsoft committed to GUI. Machines could barely keep up, took us two more years to get it all together. That was our bet, that not only could we do fantastic things with Windows, but that it would be the platform for our partners. Two years later, we could say with Windows 95 that our vision had succeeded -- 32 bit computing drove the graphical user interface, GUI, into the mainstream."*
> *Bill continued, "Windows became the majority of all software sold, with more manufacturers building more Windows machines... now 12 years later, it's a much different industry. There were a fifth as many PCs as there are today, the digital lifestyle is taken seriously. We take all these things for granted now -- Everything's becoming digital. It's a platform for people to be creative that is a central element that allows it all to thrive. Windows 95 key to its era, and Vista key to its era."*
> *"Homes are expecting integration, as things go digital, people are forming high expectations now. Windows has this exciting central position. It's been 12 years since we brought Windows and Office together..." Breakthroughs in Office and Windows. "What kinds of innovation? Features that make it all easier: search, office ribbon..." his list goes on.*
> *"Safer: a lot here... as the Internet has become mainstream, we're making sure that info is protected. So that software isn't working against you. Anti-phishing, anti-spyware, parental controls. Entertainment: some neat games, photo galleries, DVD Maker... Better connected: simpler to find Wi-Fi resources, extensions for RSS, XML capability, lots of APIs there. Definitely a platform for innovation. With Vista you can upgrade your machine."*

The Windows Vista introduction

Image Courtesy: Microsoft.com

Lefty would run Windows Vista on his business computers for a few years before upgrading to the improved in some ways and diminished in others, next version Windows 7.

Windows Vista when released to the public was widely discredited in computer communities, while being slammed to some extent undeservingly in the press. Because the *next* version of Windows was always the one to fix the past problems, the Windows 7 beta test became crucial to Microsoft's future.

What happened with Vista, he both lived through, and subsequently researched. As he wrote later in the Windows 10TP community forums, a number of factors combined to form the perfect storm.

Microsoft under considerable pressure by users to do something about the continuous threats from Internet viruses, malware, and malicious hackers had implemented what they called the Trustworthy Computer initiative. This plan caused the older insecure software, and some peripheral hardware to no longer work. This type of thing was routine for Apple Computer to do, but was not a past practice for Microsoft, who traditionally supported legacy hardware and software for many, many, years. However, Microsoft had users numbered in the hundreds of millions, not just a few million like Apple.

Microsoft introduced Vista with Aero Glass and other interface enhancements, which both required some additional system resources. This was particularly true of random access memory, RAM, hard disk space, and graphics capabilities, over and above what previous versions of XP had required. Microsoft did not realistically update their system requirements, a long-lived bad tradition, perhaps initiated by their marketing people in a sinister effort improve sales by disguising this information.

This software release was timed to be on new computers for sale during the Christmas holidays, but it came late due to problems with User Account Control, UAC. The problems made new computer shipments from Dell, Compaq, HP, etc. late arrivals to retailers. This in turn caused many retailers to take existing inventory into their back rooms to upgrade them to Vista from XP, without upgrading the then standard 512 MB of random access memory RAM, in these computers. As a result, many customers came home with a new computer, which operated slower than the one they owned previously. This kind of thing had never happened before to these customers and they became rightly upset by the betrayal. They also perhaps discovered that their old software programs, printer, or scanner also did not work with Vista. An apology from Microsoft remains outstanding. It was not tendered by including Vista users on the free

upgrade to Windows 7, 8 or 10, as thought by many to be both necessary and only the right thing to do.

UAC[122] *was created to improve security and protect the computer, however its implementation combined with the large number of authorization prompts, caused people to be annoyed by it, at least as much as they had been with Clippy.*[123]

Microsoft had then also essentially capitulated to Intel, since at the last minute it was discovered that Intel's video display chipsets would not support the Aero Glass graphics, thus these computers could not be labeled as Vista Ready.

Microsoft then invented a new category for these machines called Vista Capable, which meant the Aero Glass graphics options would require additional more advanced graphics hardware, as well as more RAM. This ***trick****, allowed both corporations to meet their quarterly earnings statements for Wall Street as well as their end of year sales projections. They thought they would be able to blow it over the heads of consumers, but they left those buyers holding the bag by selling them a slower computer with the older XP type graphics as a brand new upgraded machine.*

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[122] *User Account Control, UAC, is a technology implemented with the aim of improving the security within Microsoft Windows by limiting application software to standard user privileges until the administrator authorized this elevation. Only applications trusted by the user would receive administrative privileges, and thus malware was kept from compromising the operating system.*

[123] *Clippit, or Clippy), was an interactive animated paperclip character from the MS Office help function. This feature drew negative response and criticism from customers and even Microsoft employees. Clippy has been seriously mocked in popular culture, being parodied, meme'd, and even being made fun of by Microsoft themselves in an animated short voiced by Gilbert Godfried.*

An Epiphany

Lefty, now a divorced parent, estranged from his youngest daughter, wanted her to know him better and explain his changes. He wrote her some truth to offset a steady stream of half-truths and mistruths coming from her mother. This was his own Norwegian Wood,[124] perhaps.

> A small boy from a small town, whose summers were enveloped in baseball, winters with snow forts, snowballs, and sledding. A time full of forever friends of a kind that never come again, endless days of play and the absence of cares which only little boys know. A time of the abundance of siblings and many generations of family ever present.
>
> Then on to religious school nuns with altar boy rigidity of thought layered in heavy doses of guilt. Boy Scouts for learning independence, Little League for understanding personal discipline, and the rush of competition and victory often tasted.
>
> Then a teen, ripped from home and town to a city for secondary schooling, baseball left behind by a system that assigned no value to it, and the sadness coming from the loss of forever friends. Then onto a love affair with music and four British lads who changed the world, then added to a love of cars and machines, and with an empty public education that placed little value in either.
>
> A teenaged lust confused with love, produced a baby girl, and a hasty ill-conceived marriage out of responsibility, yet without guidance. Then snatched away by a military machine that cared little for wives or babies, and without a chance for growth from teen to father husband. The teen bride impatient, lonely and survival concerned, sought divorce from a distance and remarriage for security.
>
> A reluctant warrior, remanded by old men of power based on birth date to the fate of cannon fodder in Asia, yet for happenstance of calendar dispatched elsewhere to aid in the colonization of a race and the

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124 *On the Beatles album Rubber Soul, John Lennon's Norwegian Wood song lyrics are thought to be about an extramarital affair.*

generations of moral decay, this fate ensures. Then seeing the dichotomies of extreme poverty and the indefensible indoctrination of a people to kill cousins over differences political. Two wasted years and the loss of a boyhood hero on a mission of mercy and the airborne murder of women and children on the eve of the birth of the Prince of Peace he was indoctrinated to love. Then the tears of a boy turned man far away from home, family, and things familiar.

Then a determined yet wiser one who sought the knowledge of university to accompany his skills and passions and an inner need to transfer that for benefit of sustenance on the Dark Continent as a volunteer of peace. Then only to be saddened and confused by the greed of those in power, which prevented any resolution and fueled his disillusionment.

Then on the world of work for twenty-five years, eyes down, nose on the grindstone through teacher and instructor, a second marriage of comfort and her gift of the girl child imbedded within his heart. Then a businessman for profit and passion, through success and awards, through offices elected and appointed, and the endless work and duties which filled his days, his being, but left no room for himself.

Then a light raised his eyes and he saw her for the first time, a friend, a colleague, and her smile became his. This joy filled him and instantly assured he loved her, though he didn't know her. Much younger and absent the impressions of time, would she see him as he saw her. Could friendship transform to romance? Could she settle for half a life and dismiss the eternity she deserved? Could she be happy just to dance with their children? Could she see a sure thing – against the risky odds of the world? Would she let him bring her out of her world to show her his, and the one they could build together? Can a value can be assigned to what she has given him?

Each time he saw her he felt that smile, and when he didn't see her and was sad, the simple thought of her would warm him with joy.

Wherever the path forward, mutual love or deeper friends, he will always love her. Her smile has shown a

> light on his path to happiness. She was that light which lifted his eyes. She was his North Star.
>
> To those wounded by this personal metamorphosis and feel sorrow or anger, I seek only what anyone deserves. I wish them a light to guide their path through this life.

This realized understanding shone a light on his life, and began a transformation from his laser-like focus on *what* he wanted, to *who* he wanted to be. This epiphany changed his life.

Lefty now worked evenings toward an online Adult Education Master's Degree, at the University of Phoenix[125] and later Capella University. Filling the gaps in his time now being an empty nester, this work served as a distraction from missing his youngest gone now off to college in another part of the state.

Ever since leaving Ft. Bragg Lefty was committed to pursue his education as far as he could, in part due to the two-year military experience and the effects of doing something he disliked for a long time. This forced him into serious thinking about what he did want, and what he wanted to do with his life beyond the Army.

The University of Phoenix presented a frustrating user experience because they used an admittedly primitive and disjointed learning system interface relying on the primitive Outlook Express software as an email client, Newsgroups, and a series of disjointed websites. They could not keep their computer content servers running, however. For Lefty, now working 100-hour weeks, and without much spare time, if he could not work when he wanted it was a problem. Univ. of Phoenix, was also infatuated with the latest corporate fad of teamwork, and required their teachers to assign teams for the projects. Based on his experience, frequently one or two people would complete the assignment, the two or three other slackers having various excuses at the last minute before the deadline for their lack of participation of having been out of town, sick, their computer crashed, the Internet down, or something similar.

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[125] *The Federal Trade Commission reached the largest-ever settlement with a for-profit college, the University of Phoenix, over charges of deceptive advertising and marketing false job opportunities to students. The university's record $191 million settlement included canceling $141 million in student debt.*

One weekend with the university's servers down, he received a phone call from one of his instructor- assigned teammates who lived out west, asking questions about their assignment. As long distance phone calls were very expensive, they decided to use a message chat software program for collaboration on the assignment. This worked surprisingly well, and they were able to complete the work on time. When the servers came back up again, they posted their assignment to the site and were then told by their instructor that this would be allowed only if they also posted the chat logs for the rest of the class to read. They continued to do this during the then frequent outages of the site. Shortly after however without any explanation, they learned this workaround would no longer be allowed. This contributed to him finally leaving the program.

After taking a semester off due to frustration, he continued the online Master's degree at Capella University and found while their servers ran consistently, by then these classes became a very expensive per credit undertaking. The resulting online degree still appeared to have a dubious market value. He thought that he might want to teach online classes later during retirement, which would require him to have a Master's Degree. Based on the actual course content and learning methodologies, he became unconvinced of the whole idea. Accustomed to the Microsoft and Intel learning methodology from technical classes over the decades since undergraduate school, the school's online presentations became instead a flashback to high school. Students would be assigned a textbook chapter to read, participate in online discussions, and then answer the questions at the end of each chapter, only now in this online environment. The teachers behaved as online forum moderators. After a long phone conversation with the school Dean regarding the programs shortcomings, he heard that yes, of course, he was right, and they "were working on it."

As he worked evenings and weekends on his degree, and recently divorced, he decided to try his hand at online dating. As he read and responded to messages on his college site, he alternated with messages to and from various women algorithmically matched to him on edating.com.

Lefty's "Jetsonesque" big screen computer system

Lefty discovered that online dating was somewhat sketchy in those days and suspects this is probably still true, especially with the recent introduction of fembots.[126] The free sites were the most horrible, and even the paid ones use free weekend passes to entice paid subscriptions. He learned that people typically fail to tell the truth inside these virtual locations. They publish twenty-year-old photos as current, and largely just make stuff up. Some apparently used this service for entertainment, and perhaps for trial virtual affairs. After a few months of this nonsense, he was about to give up until he came across a particular female.

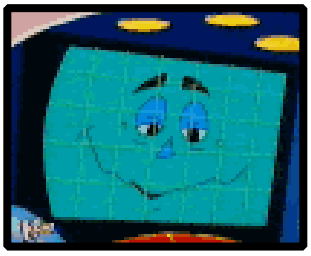
He later wrote her a summary of *their* story, to both entertain and woo her.

> It began at home one weekend day, when seated in front of my large plasma screen pushing buttons emulating my hero George Jetson. While working on the credentials to allow me to perform this Jetsonesque activity for a living in the retirement years ahead, I received a message. These digital packet switched words came from a certain White, non-Hispanic Freelance Graphic Designer living in Massachusetts, named Kynthia. Age 45, height: 5' 7'' was her description that displayed on screen. Romantically matched by the computer gods at

[126] *Fembots are website computer code, or algorithms, that try to weave the illusion that thousands of women participated on the site. These websites design algorithmic women to interact with men on the sites with faked sexy messages.*

edating.com, her beautiful bits flew through the wires, freezing me in mid button push. Her profile indicated passion, for life, for people, and a love of things simple, friendship, and adventure.

George Jetson



RUDI[127]

The edating.com computer gods further indicated our digital bits aligned in that a drive for learning, a love for music, movies, challenges, and family are shared passions. In addition to being an analog gal living in a digital world, she couldn't survive without a telephone. I would later discover her inclination to long phone conversations. Hers' was a voice I could listen to for hours, and perhaps decades I supposed.

I requested communication in textual zeros and ones, released my photos to her, and she complied according to my transcript.

I asked her 02:29 PM Pacific Time about personal space, marriage fears, romance, verbal intimacy, and sex. Her answers matched what I hoped for, and she questioned me about my actions at a party with her, how sensible he was, how dominant, if I liked to laugh and how competitive I was. I tried telling her a joke, but could not because of the digital database limitations. My answers must have passed, as they

[127] *George's job primarily required him to repeatedly push a single button on his computer named RUDI {Referential Universal Digital Indexer}. RUDI has a human personality and is a member of the Society of Preventing Cruelty to Humans. George often complained of his heavy work load- having to push this button for an hour at a time, two days per week.*

then exchanged likes and dislikes. I learned she sought a good, decent, and honest man, which brought him joy, as I knew I was all of that. I told her about my desire for marriage, home and family and my sexual passions. She seemed to understand. Boldly asking her for a photo, she was reluctant to post it right away, but later complied with a five-photo montage much to my delight. I made a joke about which of them was her, a warning to her of what was to come. But I saw a face and faces which showed me, her eyes, her smile, who she was, funny, free spirited, serious, kind, and perhaps a bit naughty. Many faces of Kynthia were displayed, and I liked them all.

Now past the formal canned edating.com computer generated questions, the next day 09:55 AM Pacific Time, she told me of the influence of people on her life, made me laugh out loud about her scaring herself watching a horror movie, and her love of self-employment which I also shared. She asked and I answered 10:09 AM Pacific Time about my spontaneity, my style, and my close friends.

The next day, to my surprise and joy, she wrote a message asking about his work and passions, expressed a desire to raise children, and provided an email address to write, including the added insecurity of "if he wanted to." He also longed to be tending additional children, and having them making noises and messes around their house, embedding a pure joy within his heart.

I messaged my compliance and we left the supposed safety within the confines of the edating.com virtual world, to strike out on an adventure of our own. Little did she know I was already half way toward smitten.

We exchanged emails and I learned more about her including her middle name, her life to this point, her holy trinity of friends, and she about my life, passions, and my idealism. They wrote with the familiarity of old friends, and quickly moved to the telephone and the wonderful conversations of destined lovers who have

> not yet met in person, with the anxieties and anticipation, of great things yet to come for them.
>
> We talked of meeting, this being the next logical step. I needed to know, and so did she. She is adventurous yet nervous. He loved her adventurous spirit and dedicated himself to make the worst-case scenario for her, a good one. They are both older now, no longer kids who can repeat mistakes and easily recover. I could not accurately describe my heart over the phone, and I tried with words consisting of 0's and 1's. I know if I can hold her hand, look into her eyes, I will become part analog and share my heart with her. She just did that to me.

Now Lefty needed to get back to work because his work productivity was shot to hell ever since he had met her. Any hope of regaining his productivity involved her being near him, to prevent him from being continuously distracted with thoughts of her. Alternatively, she will cause change in him he has been evolving toward and hoping for, and they become entwined together in what is most important in the world and disregard the rest.

As if to prove beyond all doubts, his tendencies toward the digital, he fired up his mapping software to output a map with the overland trip plan for a proposed Belize excellent adventure. He attached this to an email to both impress and woo her to join his domain, if even briefly on the coming weekend.

The whole Belize trip idea came about because a few years earlier his nonprofit agency received a request from a local foundation to ship refurbished computers to a prison in Belize. The Belize City prison was where the foundation worked to improve conditions. They were beginning a transformation from a third world prison to something resembling the modern world. Prisoners now fed on plates at tables, rather than with a shovel and wheelbarrow in their cells, as well as many other improvements. At time two young twenty-something year old Vista volunteers worked for him at his agency. After one year and the completion of their commitment, they decided to travel to Belize at the request of the foundation, to setup a duplicate computer refurbishing operation at the prison. Excited to pay

them a visit to learn how things were progressing, he became enthusiastic about this potential road trip adventure with his newfound friend Kynthia.

He continued to tell her their story, via email.

> She agrees to fly out to visit me, but then changes her mind. I call to tell her I will pay for the ticket. She thinks about his offer for a while, and then concludes that I feel serious about her, and she accepts my invitation. I also reserve a room at a nearby hotel for her to ensure her comfort. Everything now feels right for both of them.
>
> She flew the friendly skies on an overcast day, leaving Manchester NH, destination Chicago via a Philadelphia stopover. During the flight, her head was filled with a million different thoughts, unable to focus on any one thing in particular because she did not know what to expect at the airport. She pondered thoughts of doubt, but then finally arrived in Chicago.
>
> Meanwhile, I drove to the big windy airport of Irish decent, annoyed with the tollbooth delays on my way, and the time and miles to travel. Analog Kynthia of course dismissed digital cellular communication, and hadn't called from Philly. I checked the flight status on my small screen at work, and of course again on the big screen at home, and all seemed to be copasetic with the airline world, at least for right now.
>
> Driving into the metropolis spur I saw signs with data galore but information poor, in time I found parking and the right terminal. I couldn't see the terminal from parking, but sought out directions, which offered three paths, outside the most obvious, through the hotel Hilton, or via the underground tunnel. I chose the latter, as I thought this way should be visually signed, but did not know for sure.
>
> I arrived plenty early enough to meet and assist an Indian software programmer from San Jose and his massive baggage load toppling from a transport cart. Chatting for a minute, the programmer told of his consideration of relocation to the city of vote "early and often fame," Digital Lefty of course, slipped him his business card and briefly told him of his passion for the

work he did. The slight Indian man was soon swept up by friends and family for the trip into the city. I now remained on the waiting chairs alone, between the very attractive east European lady on her cellphone, and the southern woman reading her book.

The waves of people passed, most dressed to play sports or in Sunday morning kitchen attire. I watched them meet and greet and worried about the location of his analog gal. Seated at the foot of the escalator, I intermittently sat, paced, and walked outside for air and for a nervous smoke. Where is she? No, it is still early, as he needed to allow her time to navigate from gate to baggage claim. Back in the escalator seat, I watched the people coming down and decided I wanted a longer lasting view of her, as my first. Over to the chairs at the rear of the baggage area, I stood now to get this longer view, and next to a female baggage worker of African descent to whom I inquired, "Working hard or hardly working?"

Waiting and watching awhile, as a sufficient time after flight arrival had passed, I nervously queried the stranger about being in the right place at the right time. Yes, she assured him. I shyly explained that I was meeting her for the first time, and did not want to miss her. She inquired as to how he would know her, and him expressing that he would just know. Later with thoughts of did she change her mind, I further probed the stranger if it might be appropriate that he kiss her on sight, and she opined perhaps on the cheek would be about right. Then there she was, was it her? Red sweater check, white top check, but I could not see her face, still far-off from him. Up from my seat now, I walked towards her past the first baggage belt, then back deeper into the arrival area towards her. Then as if she felt the presence of my eyes upon her, she turned to him and I smiled, she smiled, and they knew.

They reached for each other's hands and she pulled me to her for a hug then separating and hugging again. I kissed her cheek and her mine. She giggled that schoolgirl giggle which had so stirred me on the phone, and I saw the relief in her eyes, and in her sigh. They both searched for her bag and she explained her lateness as her being at the wrong location, and then it became

apparent that her bag hadn't arrived. They walked hand in hand, looking into each other's eyes, to stand the line alongside others in similar circumstance. The background noise was a buzz as I tried to absorb her now so close, after being so far, for so long it seemed. Then hugs, soft kisses and small talk while at the back of the line, like love stuck teenagers who just needed to touch each other. The airline agent assured her bag would be promptly delivered to my domain and off they went together, outside into the sunshine and fresh air and into a parking structure to my awaiting Jeep.

I opened the door for her, thinking of the Bruce Springsteen lyric, "the door is open but the ride ain't free." Kynthia finally here in my car, headed for his home, and I want to keep her for a while in my domain. Not wanting to move too fast for her, she was first to ask for a real kiss, and I kissed her soft on top and bottom lips, then briefly touching tongues and felt the electric spark I would experience many times again. Hotel reservations need cancelling, I thought. Their ride home was an hour-long blur as light gave way to dark and the many lights of the city. I focused on driving safely among the cell phone talking, lane weaving, and speeding locals. I inserted the B.B. King "80" music cd and they talked about her flight, the local landscape, and I probably babbled on about my work and family.

Along the way, she revealed that the hotel was unnecessary; and she would come directly to his place. I explained to expect my rented condominium was a bachelor pad bereft of any girly stuff, as well as furniture. She said that believed in the simple life and assured him it would be fine, which eased my worry. She possessed a way of saying "it will be OK" and no matter how dire the circumstances, you just believed her. She used the word adorable for him, which he had not heard with any previous girlfriends or wives.

After retrieving my prepayment at the hotel, I brought her into his digital world. Upon walking into my condominium, she felt at ease seeing the vase with two roses placed on a table, and the fridge stocked with her favorite diet cherry soda.

The three days became a blur, but I first played her the music I loved, they watched movies on my large

display, and I explained my beloved technology. I rubbed her feet, while she rested from the flight in my sole recliner and she moaned with such delight bringing joy to my heart. I kissed her neck and nibbled her ear, and then she was mine. In my bed, we explored each other's lips and bodies, they joined, I felt her as a woman completely and then it ended suddenly, and they both lie there thinking.

Initial tension relieved but unfulfilled, they shared a restaurant dinner and conversations complete with handholding and intermittent kissing. Back to my home, and a Central Park concert with a Haynes and Matthews cover of Neil Young's Cortez the Killer and a Matthews's love song and my concurrence with his lyrics "Where you are, is where I want to be."

I slipped off to the attached garage for a smoke, returning to find her nude with a blanket and pillow on the living room floor. She called to me and positioned herself on all fours her head on the pillow, her arched back exposed her small put perky breasts and totally erect nipples. Wearing only briefs, I slipped them off mounting her from behind, and causing her to climax in waves of alternating contractions and releases, followed by orgasmic aftershocks and moans of delight. Then I summoned my remaining strength, slid underneath her kissing her perky breasts, and then her mouth in a way I had never kissed anyone before.

I covered us with a blanket and we held each other close with Henley love songs as background. She soon wanted him again, and there on his floor she mounted him this time, and taught him to provide her the pleasure he longed for and she to me in a way previously unknown. Their exhaustion sent them to my bed, where they lay close and drifted off.

The next day was spent sightseeing around town and learning about each other. At her request, I took her to a local AA meeting in the evening.

On the final morning, I drew her bubble bath in my whirlpool tub, surrounded by scented candles and soft Collins love songs. I delivered fresh coffee and left her soaking while I showered and dressed to take her to the airport. She flew back home, and I got back to my work,

my online classes, their long emails, and even longer phone calls. And oh, that voice.

Then several weeks later, presented with a medical condition, his second hernia surgery, put an end to any talk of a Belize trip. The hernia was on the other side of him this time. The first came four years earlier due to lifting and carrying his many nieces and nephews, long past the age when he should have.

This time the injury was work related and now being alone, he would need nursing for his weeklong recovery. His second daughter declined to help, but Kynthia did agree to a visit. As he recovered, they viewed the usual tourist attractions around town, made love carefully, and talked. He recovered with the help of Kynthia, aided by copious amounts of Vicodin. Then off back east, she was gone again. They emailed, phoned, and made plans for him to visit her later in the summer.

When fully recovered, he flew out east to visit. She lived near a three state border junction area, and they drove east to walk hand in hand on the sandy beaches off the rocky Maine coastline, he had only seen in the movies. Then for breakfast at a New Hampshire pancake house, with homemade maple syrup made from trees located on the property. They visited Walden Pond State Park and walked around the pond that Thoreau had written about, and he had read about as a college student. They drove to her apartment near a small town outside the big city, made love frequently, and talked. She wanted to know everything about him… from the beginning.

Back home, Lefty continued building custom computers systems, as a Microsoft OEM System Builder, and Intel Product Dealer (IPD), installing Original Equipment Manufacturer or OEM copies of Windows XP and later Windows 7. He also rebuilt computers as a Microsoft Registered Refurbisher; installing Citizenship licensed Windows and Office on their refurbished corporate donated equipment.

A couple years later, as with previous versions of Windows, Lefty downloaded the Windows 7 beta software. Windows 7 development was originally done under the codename "Blackcomb." The estimated 1000 developers working on Windows 7 split into the "core operating system" and the "Windows client experience" groups.

The Windows 7 beta, build 7000, became available for download from the Microsoft Developers Network (MSDN) and to TechNet subscribers as an ISO image. He subscribed to the MSDN Action Pack, which made MS software available for trial within his business on DVD media, which also included a subscription to the TechNet technical support website.

The Beta's public release, became available to 2.5 million people, but access to these downloads was delayed due to high network traffic at the time. The download time limit was extended once and then yet again, to allow testers to complete the download within the two extra days. Afterwards, all unfinished downloads would not complete.

Now with the faster DSL Internet connection, he managed to cut through the traffic and get the download.

The "Welcome to Windows 7" website was run by the Microsoft product marketing team to provide beta software information. The Windows Vista blog[128] displayed announcements, news, and later updated to reflect the inclusion of Windows 7. This blog was later renamed the Windows Blog. Bug reports, as well as questions, and answers, were posted on the TechNet forums.

Discussions in these forums were primarily positive, containing bug reports, requests for new features, and additions of things from Windows XP now missing in this version. They had noticed a discernable pattern of well-liked features and utilities disappearing with each successive Windows version, starting with Windows 98. The messages posted in the forum reflected this.

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[128] *A blog, or weblog, is a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries.*

No built in email client in Windows 7

Question | This question is answered | 280732 views | 61 Helpful votes | 174 replies

Comray asked on August 14, 2009

What is the solution to no email client in Windows 7? Many of my customers spend about half the time on a computer in their email. They love Outlook Express and Windows Mail. Very much dislike Web based email, Windows Live Mail (WML), Thunderbird email, and find Outlook to be more than they want plus it would cost them a lot to get it. I think this will cause many to stick with Windows XP or Vista when they are made aware of this change.

"I'm no different than anybody else with two arms, two legs, and forty-two hundred hits." Pete Rose

These forums allowed for the use of graphic Avatars[129] to represent a message poster visually, and allowed the adding of taglines as signatures to be placed at the end of each message.

Some of these taglines were humorous, some political, and some just complaints.

As usual, the geeks would find workarounds to most of the early problems in the OS.

DEFCON 1 replied on November 25, 2009

In reply to Jerzey_Al's post on November 25, 2009

"Here's some beef with WML ... I just upgraded my Vista business laptop to Win7 and now have absolutely no access to all the emails I saved to my hard drive. Not only that, but if I want to send an email, it sends it from live.com and not my Verizon email account or my business website email account. I need to be able to import all my Vista Windows Mail emails and contacts and seemingly have no way to do it. Thanks Microsoft!"

WLM and vista mail both open .eml files. To open the .eml files you used with vista mail you can easily open with WLM.

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[129] *An avatar is a graphical representation of a user or the user's alter ego or character. It takes the form of a two-dimensional icon in an Internet forum.*

You should be able to import vista mail contacts to WLM if you know where those contacts are stored.

You can choose which account to send mail from at the upper right where it says "from" dropdown box or by highlighting the account before you hit "new".

The real issue is I feel since Gates left Microsoft what we get isn't as friendly or fun to use with all of the friendly fun things that came with the original Microsoft OS. We now get commercialism and fewer functions.

Here's something that really gets me with WLM. I can't right click on a folder to empty its contents. Barf.

On occasion business decisions were responsible for loss of user functionality. This topic over time, received more than three quarter million views.

Does Windows 7 Home Premium support Remote Desktop?

Question | This question is answered | 801443 views | 123 Helpful votes | 66 replies

Asked June 26, 2009 by Alec76

Hi,

Just a quick question, I am thinking of upgrading and have Vista Business at the moment. One of the features I need is remote desktop so I can connect to my PC in the office when working from home. I was hoping that Windows 7 Home Premium has this feature.

Is this the case?

Thanks

Igor.M replied on June 26, 2009

The only versions with the "server" of Remote Desktop is Professional and Ultimate. Home Premium does NOT have this.

It has Remote Desktop Connection, meaning it can connect to other PC's, but not able to be connected to.

As in the case of Windows Vista, graphic driver issues and complaints continued with Windows 7.

"Display driver stopped responding and has recovered" error.

Question | This question is answered | 736894 views | 195 Helpful votes | 307 replies

Asked October 13, 2009 by Crabby Office Lady

LittleDevil501 replied on January 26, 2009

Hello Crabby Office Lady,

This error can happen because of an outdated video driver, to many programs running at one time or even high CPU activity. There is a link to a KB article on the following post that gives more info on the issue and helps to fix it, see:

Crabby Office Lady replied on October 27, 2009

In reply to Daniel Potyrala's post on October 13, 2009

My motherboard is NOT overheated. This is a brand new, just out of the box Lenovo W500. The issue has nothing to do with temp. Thanks, but this is not the answer.

Crabby Office Lady

The Windows 7 Launch was the first such event in MS history without Bill Gates present. Lefty choose to stay at home, and as it turned out this would have been too far to travel for so little show. He watched the webcast at his computer, and snapped some screen shots for later review.

The Windows 7 Launch, themed "Plain and Simple," was held at New York's Skylight Studios. Absent any of the previous grand displays, invented drama, or computer crashes of the past, the show was finished in about an hour's time.

Ballmer at the Windows 7 introduction

Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's recently appointed energetic CEO, did his best explaining his high hopes for Windows 7. "We're trying to make the everyday usage of the PC better," Ballmer alleged. "Number one: It works the way you want it to work. The things you need to do all the time need to be simpler."

Another MS employee demonstrated some of features that differentiated Windows 7 from its predecessors, all well received by the audience. The understated event though felt as if Windows 7 now released into the wild to be accepted or rejected based on its own perceived value.

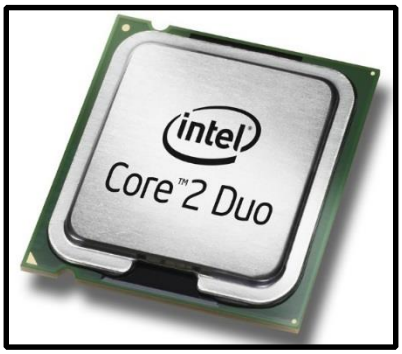
The press reacted to its shipment.

> *"Windows 7 was an incremental upgrade to the operating system, intending to address Windows Vista's critical reception while maintaining hardware and software compatibility. Windows 7 continued improvements on Windows Aero with the addition of a redesigned taskbar and tweaks made to the User Account Control system, to make it less intrusive. In contrast to Vista."*

Windows 7 was generally praised by critics, who considered the operating system to be a major improvement over its predecessor due to its increased performance, it's more intuitive interface (with particular praise devoted to the new taskbar), fewer User Account Control pop-ups, and other improvements made across the platform."

Gates had put himself in the background at the company now, but users were still optimistic and hopeful about that the next versions of Windows would bring them.

Meanwhile, Lefty continued to build custom computers for his customers, only now with the Pentium 4 multicore processors. The clock speed on the Pentium 4 processors had now become so fast that excessive heat was a problem for these air-cooled devices. Intel slowed the clock speed and introduced multiple processor cores to operate in parallel to complete the processor tasks.[130]



[130] *The Core microarchitecture returned to lower clock rates and improved the usage of both available clock cycles and power. The Core microarchitecture provided more efficient decoding stages, execution units, caches, and buses, reducing the power consumption of the CPUs while increasing their processing capacity*

Back while he attended college, Lefty followed Ted Nelson's Project Xanadu as Rolling Stone Magazine or RS, who wrote a series of articles about it. RS is where he also followed "Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail," a bizarre and very humorous pair of stories written by Hunter S. Thompson. Later, Wired Magazine also did a series of articles about Xanadu.

As a graduate student at Harvard, Ted Nelson created a system that contained a basic outline of what was to become Project Xanadu. Xanadu was a hypertext[131] word processor capable of storing multiple versions, and displaying the differences between these versions. Unable to fully complete this implementation, a system mockup proved sufficient to inspire the interest of others.

While he worked for Harcourt and Brace, Nelson named his project "Xanadu," in honor of the poem "Kublai Khan," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. According to Coleridge's Preface to "Kublai Khan," he composed the poem one night after experiencing an opium-influenced dream. This dream came to Coleridge after reading a work describing Xanadu, the summer palace of the Mongol ruler and Emperor of China, Kublai Khan.

In 1974 Nelson wrote the oversized book Computer Lib/Dream Machines, which was a compilation of his thoughts. The binding contained two books, printed back to back, for the reader to flip between. Computer Lib contains Nelson's thoughts on topics that angered him, while Dream Machines discussed his hopes for the potential of computers to assist with the arts. Ted was widely known for being eclectic and perhaps somewhat acerbic. He made significant contributions to the thinking of how personal computers should operate.

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[131] *Hypertext is text displayed on a computer screen with references (hyperlinks) to other text which the reader can access, or where text is revealed progressively at multiple levels of detail.*

Innovator, malcontent, and deep thinker, Ted Nelson

Lefty read everything computer related he found, including monthly editions of PC Magazine as well as a massive tome called the Computer Shopper. He read Nelson's self-published Computer Lib/Dream Machines with great interest, just prior to the release of the Altair 8800 kit from MITS. Computer Lib is now considered the first book about the personal computer. Nelson's book became a spirited manifesto that inspired a generation of DIY computer-lovers. In his book Tools for Thought; Howard Rheingold calls Computer Lib "the best-selling underground manifesto of the microcomputer revolution." In Steven Levy's book Hackers; Computer Lib is described as, "the epic of the computer revolution, the bible of the hacker dream."

Ted would speak frequently at panel discussions for computer conventions and explain his somewhat wild philosophy containing his four maxims: "Most people are fools, most authority is malignant, God does not exist, and everything is wrong." He was a benevolent malcontent, Lefty supposed.[132]

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132 *"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man." -- George Bernard Shaw*

A demonstration version of the Xanadu software was created, but Nelson ran out of money for the project. Later, with the advent of computer networking, Nelson refined Xanadu into a centralized information source, called "docuverse."

Nelson continued leading a group of his followers to hash out Xanadu. They worked to the point of near bankruptcy. Around this time, Nelson met John Walker, founder of Autodesk[133], at The Hackers Conference. Nelson's group then continued working on Xanadu, using Autodesk's financial support.[134]

Because of Lefty's near endless array of industry people connections and prior jobs, he received an invite to a software demonstration where he would first met Ted.

Ted told him later, that at Autodesk the group completed a version written in the C programming language. Though the software did not work exactly the way they wanted, the Xanadu demonstration at the Hackers Conference generated a lot of interest. Later a newer group of programmers hired from Xerox PARC, used the problems in this particular software version as a justification to rewrite the software in Smalltalk. This effectively split the group into two factions, and the decision to rewrite put an Autodesk imposed deadline out of the team's reach. In 1992, Autodesk divested the Xanadu group, which became the Xanadu Operating Company, which continued to struggle because of internal conflicts and lack of investment.

At the same time Tim Berners-Lee in developing the World Wide Web, saw market growth that Xanadu was not able to manage. The 1995 Wired Magazine article "The Curse of Xanadu" outlined the ending, as the Web now assimilated many of the main concepts of Xanadu. The critical structure and connection to original sources or transclusion[135] including two-way links, envisioned by Ted, remain unaddressed to this day.

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133 *Autodesk was founded by John Walker, who coauthored the first version of AutoCAD, the company's flagship computer-aided design (CAD) software.*

134 *The Hackers Conference is an invitation-only gathering of designers, engineers, and programmers to discuss industry developments and innovations. The first 150 attendees included Steve Wozniak, Ted Nelson, and Dick Stallman.*

135 *Transclusion is the inclusion of part or all of a document into other documents via hypertext reference. Transclusion displays the referencing document and creates a single integrated document made of parts assembled on the fly from separate sources on different computers, in disparate places.*

A few years earlier, Lefty and his then wife visited the British born Tim Berners-Lee in Switzerland, during a wedding anniversary cruise down the Rhine and Mosel rivers. The cruise stopped at Basel overnight, and this provided the opportunity for him to meet Berners-Lee. He rented a car and drove a couple hours to CERN near Geneva. He left his wife behind to exchange money at a bank, shop for chocolate, watches, and jewelry while he traveled. She indicated no interest in any computer stuff, and this time allowed her to fulfill most Swiss stereotypes during the trip. He heard about the hypertext work of Berners-Lee from Ted Nelson earlier requested, and received an invite to tour the facility.

As they toured, Lefty saw hyperlinking pages displayed on a client server network, an early version of the HTML language[136], and the Universal Resource Locator[137] or URL idea. Lefty flashed back to his first visit to Xerox PARC. He did not fully realize it at the time, but he also saw the first Web server running on top of the NeXTStep operating system.

Tim invited him for beers in town to talk details over dinner, the Brit enticing him by explaining that Swiss cuisine is a flavorful blend of German, French, and Italian influences. What's not to like, Lefty thought.

The restaurant menu indicated lake fish was a specialty in Switzerland, with ombre (grayling) and ombre chevalier at the head of the list, the latter a delectable but expensive treat. The tasty alpine lake fish available included trout and fried filets of tiny perch.

At the restaurant Tim told an old joke, the crux of which is that, in heaven the cooks are French, the cops are English, and the engineers are German; whereas in hell, the cooks are English, the cops are German, and the engineers are French. And perhaps in heaven, the bartenders are Irish, added Lefty.

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[136] *Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) is the standard language for creating web pages. Web browsers receive HTML documents from a webserver and render them into multimedia web pages. HTML describes the structure of a web page.*
[137] *A Uniform Resource Locator (URL), is a reference to a web resource that specifies its location on a computer network and a mechanism for retrieving it.*

At Tim's suggestion, they ordered the Bernerplatte, which is a classic provincial dish of Bern, a typical farmer's plate. When the waitress arrived, they were confronted by a mammoth pile of sauerkraut and French beans, topped with pigs' feet, sausages, ham, bacon, and pork chops. Tim also suggested that the Swiss beer was excellent; explaining that this is the preferred drink in the German-speaking part of the country. They sampled both the Helles light beer and Dunkles, dark beer.

Speaking about the local area again, Tim mentioned that these country-cured sausages could be found at open markets around the country. The best known is called bündnerfleisch, a specialty in the Grisons,.[138] the uncured meat dried in the crisp dry alpine air. Before modern refrigeration, this provided a method of meat preparation for winter consumption.

When Lefty got him to talk about his work again, Tim explained that he had worked as an independent contractor at CERN for a half year around 1980. In 1984, he returned to CERN, this time as a fellow.[139]

Tim continued his story, "They buy a very expensive NeXTcube[140] computer for evaluation, and gave it to me to use. I did my prototype implementation of the web using NeXTSTEP[141] within a few months, thanks to the qualities of the NeXTSTEP software development system. This prototype offered WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) browsing and authoring. During later brainstorming sessions in the CERN cafeteria, Tim and the group searched for a name, which remained unused from Greek mythology characters[142]. I proposed 'World-Wide Web', and they all liked the name. The rest as they say is history."

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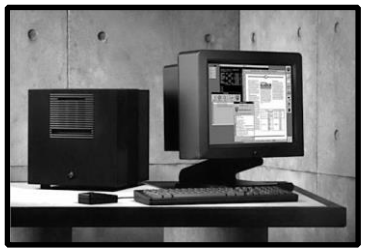
138 *The Grisons is the largest and easternmost canton of Switzerland.*
139 *In academia, a fellow is a member of a group of learned people who work together as peers in the pursuit of mutual knowledge or practice.*
140 *The NeXTcube was a high-end workstation computer developed, manufactured, and sold by NeXT. It superseded the original NeXT computer workstation, and was housed in a cube-shaped magnesium enclosure. This workstation ran the NeXTSTEP operating system and had a $10,000 list price.*
141 *NeXTSTEP was an object-oriented, multitasking operating system based on UNIX. It was developed by NeXT Computer and was initially used for its range of proprietary workstation computers such as the NeXTcube.*
142 *Since the early days of computing, Greek mythology has been used to name new technologies or even computers on a network.*



The NeXTcube computer

CERN, then the largest Internet node in Europe, provided Berners-Lee with an opportunity to join his hypertext with the Internet. “I just needed to take the hypertext idea and connect this to the Transmission Control Protocol, TCP, and domain name system ideas and—ta-da!—the World Wide Web. The creation of the web came as an act of desperation, because the situation was otherwise difficult when I worked at CERN. Most of the technology involved within the web, hypertext, and multi-font text objects, had been designed already. I just needed to put them together. I took the step of first generalizing, and then going to a higher level of abstraction. This involved thinking about the documentation systems out there, as being possibly part of a larger imaginary documentation system.”

Intrigued by computers at an early age Tim credited his abilities to his exposure from his parents working on the first commercially built computer, the Ferranti Mark. The Ferranti Mark 1 became the world's first commercially available general-purpose electronic computer. The first tidied up commercialized version the UNIVAC I, was delivered to the United States Census Bureau.

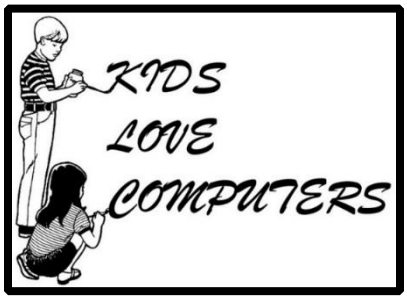
The room sized Ferranti Mark 1 computer system

Chapter Nine, The Nonprofit

C:\novel\chap9\type nonprofit.txt ↵

Having run his for-profit business for several years now, Lefty searched for a second home for his customers trade-in computers as they upgraded to newer faster models. He stopped at the local elementary school, a half mile down the road from his office where his daughter attended, and inquired about their computer usage. He previously heard President Clinton speak in a television interview about the need to get our public schools upgraded to the Internet age. Lefty agreed and was one of the early computer adopters who saw the most value in this idea. He discovered that the school contained only a few Apple II computers, being used as video game machines for indoor recess when the weather became too cold for the kids to play outdoors.

The still idealistic Lefty, offered to place one computer into each classroom Grades 1 through 5. These "386" computers used Windows 3.1, color screens, sound, and cdrom drives, would augment the few green screen Apple II's they had for the kids to use. He provided cdrom encyclopedias giving the kids the ability to research things. He also provided freeware software for reading tutorials, math drills and creating word search puzzles for weekly vocabulary words. These students would now have this learning tool available with sound, video, and graphic animations at the classroom level. This was equivalent to a Flintstones to Jetsons technology evolution, provided to them at no cost.



Around this same time, Lefty read on a CompuServe forum about this guy named Gary Sanders, who was an east coast computer magazine executive, and who was promoting a new idea for a technical corps. Previously, while giving a speech to computer company executives who advertised in his magazine, he was asked to stretch due to the next speaker running late. He then threw out what was a partially formed idea. The idea was about a corps of volunteer technical workers who would assist public schools with using computers, and with getting primary and secondary school students onto this novel Internet information superhighway. He related that in his mind, this would occur in much the same way Peace Corps volunteers worked in developing countries to provide assistance with the agricultural, water, or electrical infrastructure. He called his idea COMPUTER CORPS.

This idea obviously registered with Lefty and he ended up chartering one of the first thirteen state chapters, following the previous six state pilot program. He knew computers, knew about education, and saw the unique opportunity to meld the two. Living and working in the mostly urban and developed yet economically depressed part of the state, would ensure access to the necessary materials, and labor resources as well as the largest population who could benefit. The national COMPUTER CORPS operation was then run out of a donated space in the old DEC Clock Tower mill building back in Massachusetts.

The original scope and depth of the services Lefty's nonprofit agency offered evolved and expanded over the years. It had developed from putting computers into classrooms, and smiles on the faces of children, and expanded to include the public at large. Their website kept track of the school projects with descriptions, classroom photos, teacher testimonials, and hand written thank-you letters from the children. The early elementary grade thank you letters came printed, midgrade letters written in cursive, and in the later grades, typed using the donated computers. Lefty did newspaper, radio, and TV interviews to put out the word of what they could do using little or no money, and their hopes and aspirations for a future that included some available funding resources.

The Clinton/Gore[143] team actively promoted Internet access for schools and as a result volunteer groups sprung up around the country to help wire schools by running the required network cable into school classrooms to allow these connections.

Lefty partnered with one such group and the local school district for donated materials from local businesses, and volunteer labor used for wiring the school with the Category 5 network cable. Of course, this was difficult within the entrenched bureaucratic public school system. One vendor of donated network cable dropped out of the sponsorship in a dispute with the school districts *beggars and choosers* demand, and absolute insistence upon using only pink colored network cable. The school district got their way and the taxpayers paid for the cable in the end. Some projects proposed but remained uncompleted, due to union objections. It was as though these citizen volunteers were stealing potential overtime pay from union employees, none with any experience or training in network wiring since no schools had been previously wired. This happened inside of a budget strapped school district now feeling threatened by concerned citizens and community technical professionals, volunteering their time and the donated materials to wire these schools. This became the first school *wired* within the large twenty-school district. The local press reported on the event publishing a quote from a volunteer saying, "The President says that these schools should be wired by the year 2000, and what you are watching today, is how that happens."

Due to the high cost and limited availability of high-speed Internet connections at the time, Lefty and his team also built them a proxy server[144] connecting to a donated dial-up phone connection from a local Internet Service Provider or ISP. He placed the server, with archiving software, inside the library for the librarian to download, and curate educational Internet website content. The teachers would then call the webpages up over the local area network or LAN, bringing this content into the classroom for the kids to access.

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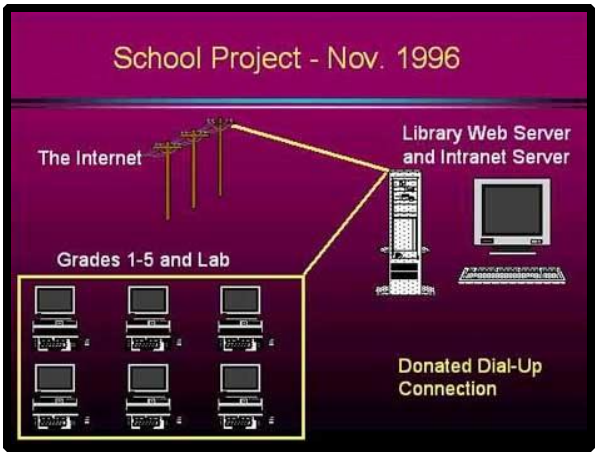
[143] *As a US Senator, Gore had been active in providing NSF grant funding for the development of the ARPANET, and led to the creation of the Internet.*

[144] *A proxy server is a server that acts on requests from computer clients seeking resources. A client computer connects to the proxy server to request a web page, and the proxy server sends the desired previously stored content to it.*



The first school project

Later, Federal monies became available to accelerate the wiring of schools. The feeding frenzy of the business hogs at the government funded trough, led to the district to hire many pirates who formed startup companies, took the taxpayer money and closed the business, but without completing the work. The taxpayers made up the difference once again. The union did receive a concession to have their employees wire one of the schools, conveniently located next door to the district office.

At around the same time, Lefty and other community technology professionals were asked to serve on the local school district's technology planning committee. He would later discover the outcome of the committee was predetermined with the selection of two school district employees as co-chairs. These professional liars just wanted to say that they had obtained the blessing for their actions from the community technology professionals. This was part of the same old nonsense of not appropriately vetting vendors or IT Management or staff, and the failure in soliciting bids from multiple vendors. They combined this with buying the wrong technologies, paying too much, and the inability to manage this. He was dismayed to learn that this was both unavoidable and unfixable regardless of what a school board member did, thought, or advocated. He wrote his own technology plan using common sense solutions to problems and submitted it for their review, which it would never receive. This experience led him to run for and serve a frustrating three year term on the local school board.

School Board

Lefty toured all twenty schools while running for this office, as he was particularly interested in their technology use. He discovered one high school computer lab that housed 20 or so ten-year-old Apple IIe's in a high school of 2000 plus students, used mainly for business education classes. At that time during the late 1990's, an elective keyboarding class was offered using a ten-year-old textbook with photo of a typewriter on the cover. It was taught in the typewriter lab rather than in the typically empty computer lab in the next room over. When questioned about this seeming dichotomy, the principal indicated that this was due to *teacher preference*. Apparently, the teachers determined whether the kids would learn about white out and corrective tape, or the cut and paste commands of word processing software. These same teachers promoted but did not model, lifelong learning, nor use what anyone could possibly call a standards based curriculum.

He found no curricular use of computers, for math,[145] science, or English language classes, outside of infrequent visits to a lab environment. In the middle and elementary schools, teachers deposited the kids with a lab teacher to go on break. The kids played a lot of Oregon Trail and some drill and practice (aka drill and kill) software in the grade schools. It made Lefty think of the Mark Twain quote about never let your schooling get in the way of your education.

His years serving on the local school board were only an exercise in frustration, being on the losing end of 5-4 votes for three years. Some board members were attorneys seeking voter name recognition for future judgeships or those who were intent on running for higher political office. There was also a local corporate element, perhaps related to taxation. They did not want to make any waves, or be involved in any controversy. There was also the occasional political crackpot whose spouse and friends became bored with their unhinged rants, and thus they sought out new audiences. They all often knew what was the right thing to do, but lacked the courage and political will to do it. As a result, the five votes typically favored the safety of the

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145 *This is rather ironic, since a computer is the ultimate math machine. It adds, subtracts, multiplies and divides.*

status quo, an unaccountable, untenable, and unsustainable twenty-year decline of public education in the community. This of course mirrored the decline of the local manufacturing economy. This slide was of course a reflection of the national loss of an industrial manufacturing based economy, and the job loss this created. This also shone a spotlight on the limitations of public school self-governance, and the many issues involved with public labor unions. On his way back home from those meetings, he frequently listened to Tom Petty's *Rhino Skin* track at full volume for some comfort, as he screamed in disgust.

School district administrators were career professional long-tongued liars, who often exhibited a distant and casual relationship with truth. These soft-shoe-shufflers frequently danced around the facts, and were well-practiced in the art of deception. As a school board member, Lefty had responsibilities, but extremely limited ability or authority to influence or effect the operations of the district.

Later it became clear that these failures also meant the continued creation of and acceptance of a school to for-profit prison pipeline, and the resultant permanent criminal underclass. As one school board member put it while cutting funding for school programs, there will always be a need for people to wash our cars and collect our trash. He likened his school board experience to slamming your finger in a car door each day. It turned out to be the same type of self-inflicted abuse. This near fifty-year decline in the nation's public education system portends a future where the citizens are unprepared to support a viable economy, nor effectively participate in self-governance. He thought it was expedient for them to set low standards and harbor low expectations for students. Because this required much less work of the administrators and teachers, yet it fully exposed the soft bigotry in these low expectations.

The hard work of teaching and learning to Lefty as a former teacher was to set high standards, provide the required support, and then revel in the progress when they reached those high expectations. He did the best he could to shift the focus from buildings and budgets, to classrooms and children. He won an Unsung Hero award for his support of the local Hispanic community, and was active in advocating for the eventual building of a new central city neighborhood school.

A dramatic increase in the number of minority non-English speaking students, the ever-growing number of special education students, in addition to state funding cuts, hammered the school district financially. Making something positive happen with their four-vote block was not remotely possible. They tried to prevent the worst of the bad things from happening, or at least delay the inevitable for the kids using parliamentary tactics and tricks. They would run the discussion past midnight and use other parliamentary tricks to run out the clock. One such effort allowed middle school students a continued choice of two classes between the foreign language, technical education, and music electives, at least for another school year.

He was successful forcing board member rhetoric into action, by having the board adopt a public charter school policy. Lefty viewed public charter schools as the introduction of a virus into the stagnant bureaucratic system, to help bring about positive change. This was one way to build a teaching staff that was not overly focused on careerism and credentialing. Charter schools also allowed for alternative environments for those like his earlier self, who did not fit comfortably into the public factory school environment, and its lack of educational options for kids.

Lefty believed in the concept of having taxpayer funded tuition money follow the kids, wherever they chose to attend school. At the same time, he believed in raising the level of competence, accountability, and transparency for everyone involved in these schools. As a former mayor of Milwaukee once put it, "The history of tax money following students into private, public, or parochial schools is a long one. This dates back to the origin of the post WWII GI Bill of Rights education benefits." Highlighting the extremes using his dry sense of humor, he pointed out that returning veterans used this taxpayer funded benefit to attend conservative private religious schools like Milwaukee's Marquette University where you could become a Jesuit, or attend, the notoriously liberal, public university in Madison where you could become a communist. Lefty also came under relentless attack by union and political forces when trying to improve instructional technology for the tens of thousands of public school students, and achieved no real success here.

As a board member, he first came to realize that computers would not, and did not change the way subject matter was taught in classrooms. This was not because these were not the right tools, or they did not have the right curricular software. What happened instead was the bureaucratic system co-opted the technology by denying access, rather than embracing it. *Teacher preference* and bureaucratic indifference prevented the transformational change from the traditional Sage on the Stage role, to a student centered learning Guide on the Side.

Lefty learned from research that for the most part we draw our teachers out of the lower one third of high school SAT scores, and yet graduate them from the Colleges of Education in the upper third of the grades. The academics explanation for this is because they are professional teachers and superior to other professors in other departments, like math, computer science, and engineering. Those who have actually enrolled in these colleges of education, would likely dispute this conclusion.

These same teachers also resisted the introduction of computers into the classrooms, due to lack of professional development (training) time, but when presented the opportunity, did not take advantage. This is not unlike the annual day off for the teacher's convention, for them to learn improved methods that few ever attend. They promoted lifelong learning but did not model the behavior for their students. Their professors in the colleges of education did not model the computer use their students either, choosing to use forty-year-old textbooks instead.

School board union Grievance committee meetings became stomach-turning discussions of complaints from certain teachers who complained that they should have been paid .50 cents per minute for lunch duty rather than the .45 cents per minute they received, and complaints of that nature. Lefty realized that this must be what the public education system looks like while failing. It took the appearance of incompetence, corruption, and the focus on what had become an adult employment system with the adults fighting over the scraps that rightfully belong to the children.

Redoubling his nonprofit efforts

The work he did using his nonprofit agency in assistance to schools, he found a few forward thinking public school principals and teachers, which did result in positive outcomes.

While on the school board, he became aware of a ninth grade dropout problem within the district. This problem could be traced back to a failure to read at grade level as measured at the 3rd grade, which could be traced back to coming into kindergarten not having been taught colors, shapes and numbers by their parents. They had never learned the ABC song. The public school system was not very well suited to remediation and would pass them along until this caught up to them in high school when they failed freshman English class. Now ashamed and embarrassed, they mostly dropped out of school. This system taught to the middle level and the bottom fell behind and the top were bored and unchallenged. But Lefty knew and promoted computers as being a tool that allowed students to work at their own pace, regardless of level.

Due to a big donation of corporate surplus laptops, his nonprofit agency designed a program without special funding, to help provide the additional support that these kids needed and were not receiving. They initiated a program to provide a laptop computer to those first year high school students who were at risk of not graduating. Their teachers identified these students, and Lefty introduced a requirement for them to complete an essay in order to qualify. The essay allowed them to answer the question of how a laptop would help them do their schoolwork. The point of this essay was three-fold, first to get them thinking about how they would use this tool to help themselves, second to make the point that this was not a toy for game playing, and third to make them feel that they were required to do something to earn this gift.

Lefty reveled in reading many of the creative and well-written student essays received. One student also included a pencil drawing of himself sitting at his bedroom desk, sketching a dream bubble of him working on a laptop computer sitting on that same desk.

His agency worked to help schools learn about computers, or get on the Internet and this was difficult due to the lack of

available computers. The first order of business for his nonprofit became to create a refurbishing operation to produce the necessary computers[146] for volunteers to install and train on in the schools. They applied for and received state and Federal nonprofit status, which allowed Lefty's group to solicit and accept many thousands of surplus computer donations from businesses, government sources, and corporations in the surrounding area for most of the next two decades.

For the first ten years, Lefty would go on these computer pickups, scheduled on weekdays during normal business hours. Typically accompanying him when he did not go alone was longtime retired volunteer Charlie[147] whose pickup truck and trailer became heavily used and sometimes abused. Frequently upon arrival at the sponsor, the list of donations would increase dramatically. This was most likely due to the sponsor carefully analyzing what they held, and deciding that this was a good opportunity to get rid of some stuff. Alternatively, perhaps finding things they did not know they held. Asset management was typically weak within these companies, and pickup requests based on their available storage space. This fact thwarted his many attempts to setup scheduled routine pickups.

Overload springs on the pickup truck became necessary, and broken trailer leaf springs replaced. Charlie would like to say that we are not Sanford and Son, [148]meaning they did not want to become junk collectors. They wanted stuff good enough to refurbish, perhaps mixed with stuff that was only suitable for recycling. Later on the volumes became so great that rental trucks, sometimes two or three, became necessary for pickups.

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146 *All refurbished computers had an asset sticker attached with the specifications and the phone number of their organization. Recipients were encouraged to return the computers for recycling at the end of its useful life, and these were taken back for later recycling at no cost.*

147 *Lefty had met Charlie when he was installing a new computer lab at a manufacturing company. In telling Charlie about his nonprofit work, he couldn't believe we were putting computers in schools for free in the early days, and wanted to help, and then became a volunteer for the next ten years.*

148 *Sanford and Son was a 1970s TV show staring Fred Sanford, as a junk dealer living in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles with his son Lamont.*

On occasion ancient and rare computer stuff was received, which must have fallen behind the shelving, or was at the bottom of an old pile. They created display shelving in their building to house a computer museum. This gave the volunteer kids, aged 13 and up, some perspective on how technology evolved before many of them were born. At times, they also received brand new peripherals but old technologies, or new old stock.

Reel to reel data tapes, 8-inch floppy disks, cdrom drive under the laptop keyboard, and an original luggable computer.

The collection, which included an original IBM PC, was eventually donated to the local university Computer Science department for the benefit of their students, when the loss of their building lease eliminated the necessary space.

University museum display

These equipment donations came in small numbers from town, village, and city governments, small and medium businesses, large and wealthy public school districts. They came in huge numbers from several Federal government sources.

In the early days, they would backup to the loading dock at a local Federal building, get a key for the freight elevator from the security guard to go collect the equipment from the various floors of the building. After the Oklahoma City truck bombing, this process was much more complex. They were stopped by security guards in the nearby alley, scanned by handheld wands, and questioned before allowed any entrance to the loading dock. The equipment had already been placed on carts at the dock, and they simply needed to load it.

To pick up equipment at the windy city Federal building, things were even more complex. They needed to submit names and info of the persons involved, and information regarding the rental truck(s), for prior approval before arrival. Upon arrival, they were scanned and rigorously questioned prior to entrance to the loading docks.

They also tapped nonprofit hospitals, and major package shipping companies. Lefty saw these activities as the positive two-fold redistribution of taxpayer monies from both Federal agencies and wealthy school districts, to the poorly funded and geographically discriminated public and parochial schools.

In the very beginning, the group consisted of just himself and three high school *geek boys*, a high school Business Education teacher and her teenaged son. They worked once a week on Saturdays in donated space provided by a local computer shop, in an old brick school building, somewhat appropriately. They moved tables out of a conference room to a work area in order to rebuild the computers. At the end of the workday, they needed to put everything away. Then later, they used a larger full time donated second floor space in an old manufacturing company's former engineering center. They created computer-training labs in their second, two labs in their third and fourth building. When these buildings changed ownership hands, the incoming landlords were inclined to evict the freeloaders first, so they moved frequently. The labs ranged over time from 15-25 computers connected to the broadband network and the local network domain server. The labs provided space used for

training high school teachers about software applications, and searching out education related curriculum. They provided teachers with donated web based curriculum, and tried to teach them its use. For the most part these teachers spent the time surfing around on the Internet, and paid little attention to learning anything new.

The labs primary use was for training recipients of low cost computer systems through the various nonprofit programs offered. On occasion, both labs were in use simultaneously. They loaned out the use of these labs to other nonprofit organizations for training. They also later rented out these labs to local business's to do training for rollouts of newly introduced software packages inside their organizations. Lefty taught dozens of Outlook email software classes for local nonprofit's.

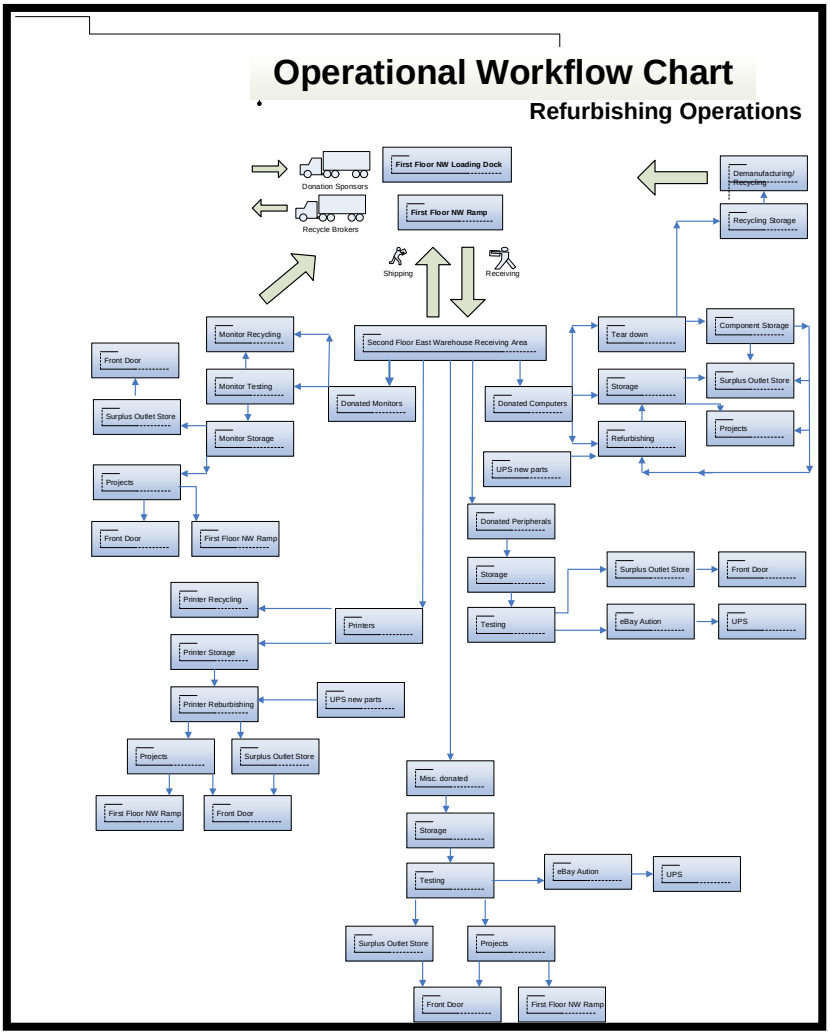
He also taught website design classes for the private charter schoolchildren housed elsewhere in their building complex. They also hosted those webpages in their datacenter. This at first donated space, and then later paid building space, was housed in a massive area inside an old, but now defunct book publisher building, best known for publishing popular children's books.

This building complex was four stories and at least 400,000 square feet in total. His nonprofit used 5, then 10, and later 16,000 square feet of the available space at the front of the second floor. The loading dock was available at the rear of the building complex and down a floor on the freight elevator. Businesses similar to this book publisher grew rapidly and grafted building after building onto the main complex with little thought to work flow and process optimization. To make the best of the space they used, Lefty worked to make the refurbishing and recycling processes as efficient as he could in this facility with significant impairments to being efficient. Even the weekly trash runs would require multiple wheeled carts, to navigate through the complex maze to arrive at the dumpsters.

Later, the rent was raised to an astronomical level, and this became a major factor in them moving to their fifth of what over time became seven buildings, across the two decades of their operations.

They recruited dozens of *core* volunteers over the years, who worked on the facilities, built and insulated walls, and did the electrical work. They ran the necessary miles of network cables

and made the many hundreds of wire terminations. These volunteers became integral to adapting the building to their use. He paid them when he could, and fed them when he could not. There was always free soda, ala Microsoft and Compaq Computer, inside their fridge donated from a scratch and dent appliance sale by one sponsor.



Always on the lookout for progressive teachers and administrators, Lefty's group of volunteers used the first batch of DOS driven, black and white screened, refurbished laptops for a high school remedial English class. The teacher was trying to improve the students writing but they remained unmotivated to do the necessary rewriting longhand after her corrections. Using the laptops, this editing became effortless and their writing skills improved remarkably. The teacher told him they wrote their assignments that included emotionally shocking personal stories of their poverty ridden home lives. These writing assignments perhaps became an unexpected personal therapeutic exercise. No other classroom in this thousand plus student high school used laptops. Kids passing in the halls would see them through the open door, and stop to ask the teacher if they could take her class. She was teaching remedial students, the Sweathogs[149] of the school, and she needed to tell them sorry but they could not to attend. For a while anyway, those who always had the least, now for once had the most.

Lefty's nonprofit received a software donation from Microsoft through the COMPUTER CORPS national office. The four original volunteers installed these hundred donated Windows 95 updates on machines in distant towns, traveling for a whole day at times. On one Saturday, they updated two 20-computer school labs on a town 100 miles north and on another Saturday two 20-computer school labs at a town 120 miles southwest. Back in those days, they installed the software using the numerous sequential diskettes. They would upgrade one lab in the morning, have lunch at the local fast food place, and do another lab in the afternoon before returning home. Within the local school district, they could only find three computers, one at each high school drafting department, technically eligible for the update.

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[149] *Welcome Back Kotter, was a television sitcom starring a wisecracking, high school teacher in charge of a racially and ethnically diverse remedial class known as the "Sweathogs". The school dismissed the Sweathogs as witless hoodlums, and only expected the teacher to contain them until they dropped out, or were otherwise banished from school. As a former remedial student, and a founding member of the original class of Sweathogs, the teacher befriended the current Sweathogs and stimulated their potential.*

Later on, Lefty's volunteers consisted of high school kids looking to volunteer their time in exchange for National Honor Society credits, to satisfy private school volunteer requirements, and some simply for learning about computers. They also attracted laid off adults who looked for retraining and a new career. They would also provide internships to local technical school and university students, some work experiences for county job services clients, and second chances via an arrangement with the local prison system.

Most understood the tradeoff that while not being paid for their work, they were not charged tuition for their education either.

Over these years, they also hosted five AmeriCorps Vista[150] volunteers. Most of them made great contributions to the growth and stability of his fledging organization, by managing the various departments and the volunteers.

Most young volunteers needed a lot of supervision. Lefty relished his role as a mentor, and what was essentially a high school shop teacher job. Volunteers aged 13 and older, and for the most part smart, reliable and hardworking, but also young and goofy. Similar to a new notebook purchased in the stationary store, these kids contained many pages but with nothing much written on them. It was humorous to watch these kids, pre-driver's license, try to navigate a four-foot pallet of computer equipment using a pallet jack, through an eight-foot door and hitting both sides before getting it through the middle. The young ones were known as Grasshoppers, or hoppers for short. As in, "you have much to learn Grasshopper."[151] *Hopper* became a word that could be used as a noun, a verb, or on occasion, a swear word.

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[150] *AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program designed to help alleviate poverty. VISTA was created by President Lyndon Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as a domestic version of the Peace Corps. Vista Volunteers serve in communities throughout the U.S., focusing on enriching educational programs and vocational training for the nation's underprivileged.*

[151] *In the TV show Kung Fu, Caine is the orphaned son of an American man, and Chinese woman, in 19th-century China. He is accepted for training at a monastery, where he became a Shaolin priest and martial arts expert. Caine's beloved mentor and elder, Master Po, calls his young student "Grasshopper".*

At sixteen years old, he lost many volunteers due to the trifecta of a driver's license, a girlfriend, and a paying job. At around this age, they needed the jingle of coins in their pockets to buy gas and take their girlfriends on dates. Some however remained for as long as ten years, volunteering on Saturdays and holidays, when not in school or at work. Later when the agency employed paid staff managing the operations and the volunteers, some of them were hired. Others advanced to careers in IT, Engineering, and other technical fields, and one a Master's Degree in Engineering.

Most demonstrated the ability to leverage their experience into something better. One particular volunteer turned student, who when arriving at his college dorm room for the first time discovered his Internet connection was not working. He called the college IT department, who indicated they would send someone over. Meanwhile he fixed the problem himself and when they arrived and questioned him as to how he had done it, his explanation earned him a job offer. He had parlayed his volunteer experience into a part time job, and would not wear a paper hat to flip burgers during his four years at school.

These volunteers would also receive a free computer system, which they refurbished themselves, once they crossed the fifty-volunteer hour threshold. This would typically end up being the sole computer in their house, causing some sibling rivalry, but it helped them do their schoolwork. The younger ones would be constantly picking through the recycle parts pile looking for something useable. Lefty would generally let them have whatever they wanted, with an understanding that they would stop filling their bedrooms with this stuff, one day before their Mom would come and yell at *him* about this. Some would make something useful, as did the kid who mounted a motherboard, and hard disk on the back window shelf of his car to play mp3 music files to his car stereo.

The younger and newer ones received initial training by cleaning the building, sweeping the floor, and emptying the trash, as Lefty had done for his dad as a teenager. Those who stuck it out, gained greater responsibilities as they learned their way around the building, the way things are done, and who they should listen to, and what behaviors to model. They advanced to cleaning computers cases, and insides using a special vacuum cleaner. They cleaned and tested keyboards by typing *the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog*, which used many of the keys. They cleaned mice balls and rollers, and other computer parts. They tested and cleaned CRT monitors, as many as nine at a time in their test rack, ran software updates on inventory store computers, and within the computer labs. They helped surplus outlet store customers load purchased computer systems into their cars. They did the equipment pickups loading donated computer systems into pickup trucks, trailers, or large rental trucks, to bring them back to the shop. They separated the donated computer equipment and peripherals, into piles called oysters and pearls.[152] For a time these components were referred to as either Scottish or non-Scottish.[153]

They loaded, delivered, and installed computers for school projects, always done on Saturdays and they at times traveled long distances sometimes at their own expense. Lefty always worked directly with them, because if they worked he felt he needed to be there as well. On Saturday's they attracted the most volunteers and the schools normally closed, which made the installations easier. Some public school teachers tried to use demands for overtime pay, as leverage against the school district regarding union contract negotiations. Lefty and his agency simply refused involvement in this type of drama, and the kids at those schools went without and suffered as a result.

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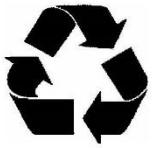
[152] *Oysters were equipment that would go to recycling because they could not be reused for the refurbishing operation, or sold in their store or online, due to age, operational status, or type of technology. Pearls were the equipment that could be refurbished and reused.*

[153] *From the Saturday Night Live skit, which portrayed a Scottish-only made retail store, where everything that was not Scottish made, was CRAP!*

They loaded dozens of 50-foot semi-trailers and 70 ft. cargo containers with recyclable computer parts over the years. This amounted to hundreds of thousands of pounds per year, which also generated some revenue. They would transport the palletized and shrink-wrapped equipment, at times eight feet high, from the front of the building complex to the rear using a forklift and pallet jacks. This was a distance of several hundred feet, and down a freight elevator to the loading docks to double-stack pack the load into the semitrailers or shipping containers.

Lefty reminded them that one ton of electronic scrap from salvaged personal computers contains more gold than could be recovered from seventeen tons of gold ore dug out of the ground. Thus, their work helped to protect the environment around them. Lefty also reinforced the importance of their recycling work by posting a chart showing the advantages of computer reuse over recycling.

A Comparison of Reuse Versus Recycling



This example was prepared using the United States Electronics Environmental Benefits Calculator *.

The environmental benefits of Reuse and Recycling are compared. 100 computers with CRT monitors are either Recycled or Reused. The savings are compared to disposing of the equipment in a landfill.

	100 Computers Recycled	100 Computers Reused
Energy Savings	Saves enough electricity to power **2.75** U.S. households in a year	Saves enough electricity to power **68.00** U.S. households in a year
Greenhouse Gas Reduction**	Same as removing **1.95** passenger cars from the road per year	Same as removing **48** passenger cars from the road per year
Solid Waste Reduction	Removes the equivalent of the solid waste generated by **1.8** households per year	Removes the equivalent of the solid waste generated by **1.8** households per year
Primary Material Savings**	Saves the equivalent weight of **7.33** refrigerators	Saves the equivalent weight of **7.33** refrigerators
Hazardous Waste Reduction	Reduces hazardous waste by the weight of **720** bricks	Reduces hazardous waste by the weight of **720** bricks
Toxic Material Reduction: All Toxics (including Mercury)	Reduces toxic materials waste by the weight of **3.97** bricks	Reduces toxic materials waste by the weight of **3.97** bricks
Toxic Material Reduction: Mercury Only	Reduces the amount of Mercury in fewer than **0.01** mercury fever thermometers"	Reduces the amount of Mercury in fewer than **0.01** mercury fever thermometers
Air Emissions**	Reduces air emissions by **129** metric tons (142.2 U.S. tons)	Reduces air emissions by **3,183** metric tons (3,508.7 U.S. tons)
Water emissions**	Reduces water emissions by **0.27** metric tons (0.30 U.S. tons)	Reduces water emissions by **6.66** metric tons (7.43 U.S. tons)
Replacement Cost Savings	**$2,708**	**$66,801**

* http://eerc.ra.utk.edu/ccpct/eebc/eebc

** These may be proportionally greater than other metrics ,as they include all material inputs, including those from upstream processes. These estimates do not account for impacts from product/material substitutions that might replace restricted materials.

Prepared by Computers for Classrooms, Chico, CA

March 2008

Refurbishing used corporate surplus computers also gave these volunteers a broad skill set, beyond anything they would obtain in such a short time working at a normal computer shop. They experienced different and challenging real world problems, unlike the private or public technical school environment and their use of artificial problem simulation exercises. They also learned things outside the usual problems a residential computer user bringing a computer into a repair shop would have. They became experts in diagnosing, troubleshooting, and repairing a wide range of operational problems. They became experts in computer software imaging, bios reprogramming, and replacing high maintenance failed components. They learned to solder motherboards to replace bad capacitors, as well as the frequently damaged power jacks on laptops. They learned to replace oft broken LCD screens and damaged keyboards on low cost consumer grade customer laptops. They learned how to upgrade computer performance adding additional memory and larger hard disks, as this was done to most of the refurbished computers. He continually reminded them to think logically like Spock[154], which was a key to troubleshooting problems. Lefty likened this to hearing hoof beats and thinking horses, not zebras. He imparted the wisdom in Occam's razor, a principle from philosophy, which dictates that if two or more explanations exist, the simpler one is usually the better course of action.

The computer refurbishing operation continued growing and now expanded to include public facing self-supporting services. These included, a surplus outlet store, computer repair service, a recycling operation, a software-training program, IT Management Services for other businesses, a wireless Internet provider business or WISP, and a data center operation. They now operated from a 13,000 sq. ft. abandoned grocery store that was the former anchor store of a strip mall. This building offered the unique advantages of a semi-residential location for customer traffic and large parking lot, and included the

[154] *Spock is a Vulcan, a fictional extraterrestrial humanoid species in the Star Trek franchise who originate from the planet Vulcan. They are noted for their attempt to live by logic and reason with as little interference from emotion as possible.*

necessary amenities of an industrial park, like having a large high ceiling warehouse with a truck loading dock.

Lefty took meetings with the local United Way chapter, the Chamber of Commerce, the County executive and the head of the county economic development corporation. He submitted and evangelized a number of proposals for their consideration, including the following one on the PC's For the County Program.

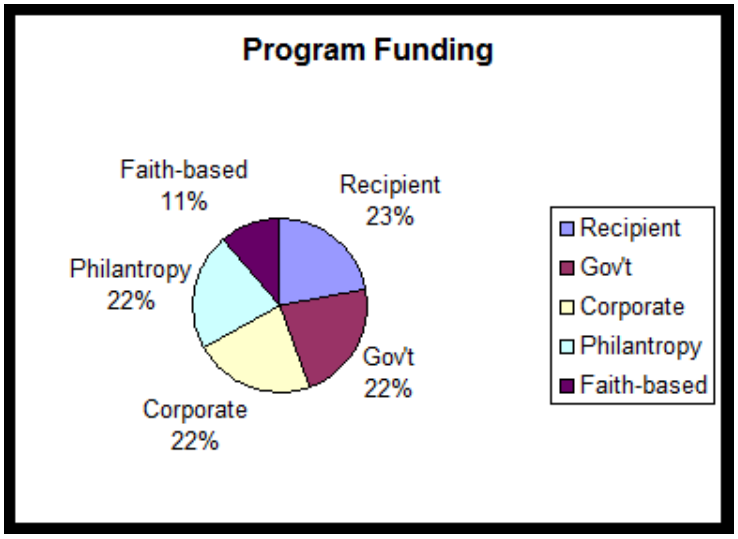
The PC's For County project (PCFC) is directed at reducing the "digital divide" within the County. The "digital divide" describes the gap between people who have access to computer technology and those who do not. PCFC strikes at the heart of this "divide" by placing personal computer systems into the homes of qualifying families. Placing refurbished computers into the homes of families who do not have the financial means to purchase a computer, enhances the children's education but also allow the parents to become part of the "digital world". This project seeks to provide 1000 County residents with the tools necessary to compete for jobs and educational opportunities. The key elements of the program are:

- Refurbished desktop and laptop computer systems
- Technical support, consisting of phone, email, and carry-in repair
- Computer skills training, consisting of two 2.5 hours classroom training sessions plus a 30 minute hook-up and use session at the time of computer pickup
- BridgeNet dialup or broadband wireless Internet service for one year, which included virus and spam filtering. This service is renewable after one year

The primary project goals and objectives align to the CEDC, (County Economic Development Plan), Challenges One, Two, and Seven. This project wholly aligned with Challenge Six, *to ensure greater social equity and economic opportunity…* with the strategy of sponsoring a countywide initiative to increase the computer use and technological proficiency of the overall community particularly the low-income, minority, and older populations.

Known program costs include the computer system itself, technical support, training, and the Internet Service. Unknown program costs include literacy training, English as a second language or ESL services, and childcare services.

Shared program funding sources include the recipients, government, corporate investment, and both private and corporate philanthropy. Sources include the wireless Internet provisioning partner, as well as the NPO's and Faith-based organizations.



Other proposals as follows were submitted to the local public school districts, included the PC's For the Classroom Program.

"On the 27th anniversary year of the invention of the Personal Computer, we at Computer Corps have a big idea:

This idea drives the high school classroom curricula using the web, instructional software, and computers as mainstream instructional tools directly into instructional classrooms.

Currently, computers are being placed within computer labs, libraries, and common areas but are not being used in any significant way to teach English, Math, Social Studies, etc.

The rationales for this proposal are multiple, but include:

- Allow advanced students to move forward of the class
- Allow at risk students to catch up to the rest of the class
- Allow teachers to make the curriculum more compelling and relevant
- Allow the students themselves to take some responsibility for their own learning

When implemented properly, we believe the positive impacts include:

- Reduced suspensions and expulsions
- Increased graduation rate
- Reduced 9th grade dropout rate
- Improved test scores
- Improved continuing education success, and lifelong learning development

The means to accomplish this are outlined below.

Place a four-unit mini computer lab within each high school instructional classroom, in a cost effective manner. This includes the required network equipment for connection to the school network for Internet access, and a shared classroom laser printer. We believe these units can be accommodated by physical space, electrical load, and HVAC requirements in most school buildings.

This is a cost recovery donation, and as such we will act as a donation partner and not a vendor. We do need assurances that these computers are used in a productive manner to the benefit of the students and do not sit in the classroom turned off or displaying screen savers all day. As a result, certain criterion needs to be met, for us to extend this offer:

- A commitment from the school district to create, in conjunction with the agency, criteria, and a tracking mechanism, for measuring a successful implementation
- A district created plan showing how this technology is used to augment and supplement the existing curriculum
- A district created plan showing how teachers are trained to adopt these tools into curriculum delivery
- A commitment to study full implementation for all classrooms following a successful pilot program which meets the agreed to criteria, from the district school board
- No visible resistance or interference from teachers or teacher unions

This proposal calls for a pilot project during the coming summer months. We would assume five classroom units at each high school. The district will make this determination, and which specific classrooms to use.

Warranty and support is for three years, and it is our expectation that these units are replaced with a newer units after three school years use. The warranty includes phone, email, and carry-in support. On-site support is to be performed by the district IT department, or with an agency support contract; the cost being based on the total hours of support required.

Teacher training in the integration of the technologies into the curriculum will be a school district responsibility. Training on the use of the equipment when needed, is accomplished by the school district or the agency under a contract.

We believe we have laid out here everything necessary for a successful implementation, as we are willing to work with the district as a partner, toward a set of shared interests and goals.

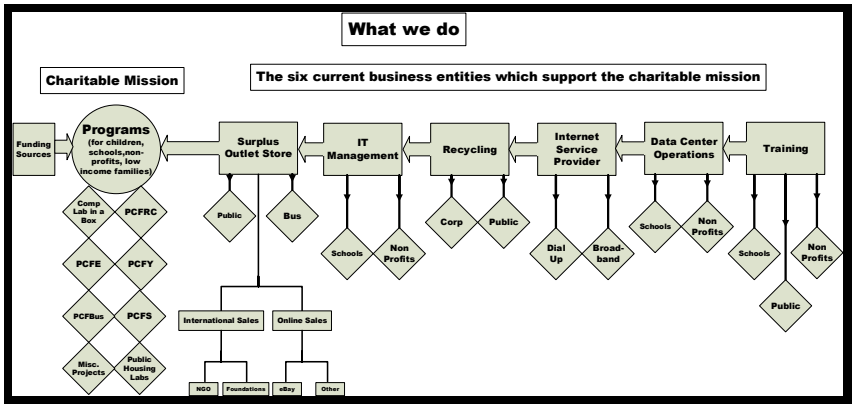
Executive Director, 2005

Lefty took many meetings with community and school leaders, continuing to push his plans for sustainable and equal economic development for many years. These proposals were off an initial fifty computer pilot program, and then expanded to a program for the federally funded Lighted Schoolhouse project of five hundred computer recipients. Lefty taught many of the hundreds of hours of software training classes for these families and produced the necessary training guide documents.

His agency also collaborated with a daycare center inside the building complex to provide care for the children of the students during these evening classes. These low-income adult students took pre and post class evaluations, that were used to track their progress. The community was eventually denied any further success due to a supposed extreme lack of interest and understanding by those solicited for continued support.

Lefty was now solely focused on the nonprofit, and without the continued financial support coming from his now closed for-profit business. He worked to make the nonprofit agency stand on its own. He deferred a salary for the first ten years, but now he required one. Over the years with the help of many others, he put in place a business model which would hopefully sustain and ensure the agencies future.

An unfortunate side effect was that many potential funders misconstrued this hybrid model as a for-profit business model. This in turn made them ineligible for grants in the eyes of many unenlightened and uninformed grantors. Things became particularly difficult over the course of the eight years of the 43rd President as most grant programs, specifically those begun by the 42nd President, were *bushwhacked* out of existence. Lefty's agency became fated to extracting resources and funding out of the historically depressed local economy that displayed the most need, but with the least resources and abilities to fulfill them. This was not a recipe for long term success.



The germination of this hybrid nonprofit business approach came from books he read, and the online research he did, about a relatively new business concept called social entrepreneurships.[155]

Lefty formulated a specific agency and geographic version of this model, which expanded the programs they already offered. Under qualification guidelines and targeted funding, they expanded the programs out to a wider audience, which was mainly the general public. He also invented innovative ways of using donated equipment resources to fulfill the needs of existing customers, by creating some original services.

They opened a public facing surplus outlet store at their third building and then significantly expanded its size at their fourth building.

Their Press Release read:

> *We are pleased to announce the latest in its continued efforts to bridge the digital divide worldwide with the announcement of a Surplus Outlet Store. Our new outlet offers used refurbished computers, hardware, software, computer accessories and computer repair and maintenance by certified computer technicians and highly skilled and experienced volunteers. Proceeds from sales and service help support the charitable programs that we currently operate.*

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155 *Social entrepreneurship is the use of techniques by companies to develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues. For-profit entrepreneurs typically measure performance using business metrics like profit, revenues, and increases in stock prices, but social entrepreneurs are non-profits and blend some for-profit goals with generating a positive "return to society".*

The public facing surplus outlet store sold computers on a cost recovery basis, complete beginner computer systems including one-year warranties for a hundred dollars, at first using CRT[156] and then later small LCD[157] monitors. These systems included Windows and MS Office; licenses donated by MS, and other freeware utility software like a PDF document reader, a Flash player, antivirus software, and included a cd burner and speakers as hardware peripherals. Newer and faster systems including 17 or 19-inch monitors and three-piece speaker systems, DVD burners and color ink printers at higher prices. They included a two year and later as the economy got worse, a three-year warranty. The *hoppers* packed up and loaded these computer systems into customer vehicles upon purchase.

Educating customers about the difference between warranty and user created problems was an issue with the store. He needed to explain frequently that the warranty covered the behavior of the computer, and not the behavior of the user. Insurance is what covers people behavior, Lefty explained. Customers also became upset at discovering their boyfriends or teenaged sons, infected the computer with malware from surfing porn sites or by visiting BitTorrent[158] sites to download pirated content.

Lefty stored software images[159] of the computers they sold, and would charge a small fee to reimage back the way it was when new. Other computers purchased at big box stores, would require a complete rebuild. This later procedure was a time consuming project involving the manually loading of the software, hardware drivers, and of course Windows updates.

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156 *The cathode ray vacuum tube (CRT) contains one or more electron guns, a phosphorescent screen, and is used to display images.*
157 *A liquid-crystal display (LCD) is a flat-panel display that uses the light-modulating properties of liquid crystals. LCDs are used in computer monitors.*
158 *BitTorrent is a communications protocol for Peer-to-Peer file sharing, which is used to distribute data and electronic files over the Internet. It is one of the most common protocols for transferring often pirated large files, such as digital video files containing TV shows, video clips, or digital music files.*
159 *A disk image is a computer file containing the contents and structure of a hard disk drive.*

Many examples of these kinds of problems happened in the store, including a melted laptop. One lady purchased a laptop, which came complete with carrying case, for a gift at Christmas time. Similar to most store customers, she did not know much about computers. Lefty would always give these customers a short tutorial on how to power it on, off, and on basic operation, including using the preinstalled software. This lady took the computer home, played with it for a while and then failing to shut it off, gift-wrapped it and put it under the bed. Opening the present on Christmas day revealed a melted laptop, which she brought back into the store for warranty replacement. Although he felt somewhat sad about this, it was not a warrantable failure but was perhaps a home insurance claim.

Lefty was cautious about providing agency supporting services that generated UBIT and would potentially jeopardize the agencies tax-exempt status.[160] He was not about to fall out of favor with the IRS by opening an ice-cream stand in their building to generate revenue, even if the staff of volunteers gained from the experience.

The nonprofit agency operated on a cost recovery basis.[161] The costs to store customers and nonprofit donation recipients were significantly reduced, but not free.

None of these services provided much revenue, but combined they offered the hope of building a sustainable hybrid business model for nonprofit's around the country, and perhaps around the world.

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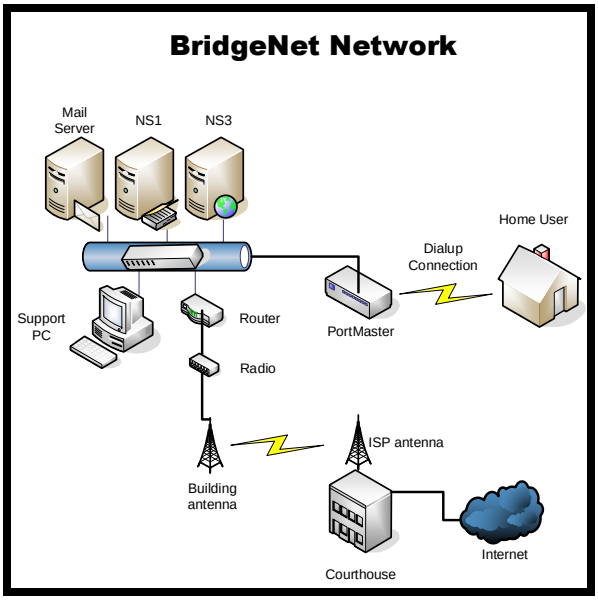
[160] *Unrelated Business Income Tax or UBIT is taxable revenue generated by a nonprofit, which is unrelated to the organizations mission.*

[161] *A calculation which determines the refurbishment costs of a piece of equipment, transportation, parts, overhead and labor costs, and then determines a donation value to reach a breakeven point.*

Part of this hybrid business model was to expand their Internet business BridgeNet, to include the general public. They used a 24-port modem device supplied with a T1 line from the *evil empire* phone company for dialing into their system. The volunteers bios flashed[162] many hundreds of 56k modems, to maximize their connection speed before they installed them into the refurbished computers. Once dialed into BridgeNet, customers connected out to the Internet via the agency's broadband wireless connection from the roof of their building to a local ISP. This wireless broadband system was later replaced by a phone company DSL connection.

They ran their own email and DNS servers, which provided another opportunity for support experience to the volunteers, outside the computer refurbishing business. This included opportunities for telephone technical support. "Hello, are you sure it is plugged in and if so, have you tried turning it off and back on again?"

[162] *In modern PCs, the BIOS is stored in a rewritable memory chip, allowing the computer code contents to be replaced and modified. This rewriting of the contents is sometimes termed flashing. A BIOS chip might be reflashed in order to upgrade to a newer version to fix bugs or improve performance, to support newer hardware, or a reflashing operation may be needed to fix a damaged BIOS code.*

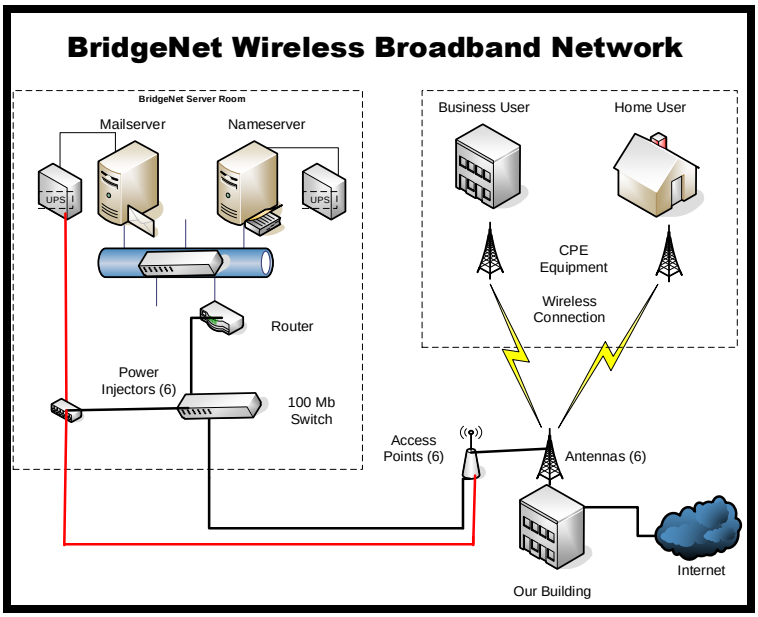


They were then deep into the process of designing, engineering, installing and testing a broadband wireless network to bring additional Internet bandwidth to their existing customers and to expand their customer base, when they lost their building lease.

Wireless antennas and network servers

Their corporate landlords apparently decided his agency was captive to this building, as Lefty and his volunteers had done a massive amount of infrastructure work to make the space fit their operations, and so they could get away with tripling the rent on the new lease. Due to the inefficiencies of the building complex, they decided instead to move. This at first delayed, and then finally shattered the hopes for their wireless broadband network, which never advanced beyond the initial neighborhood pilot program. So they moved yet again, and now also ran a large surplus outlet store operating out of this old grocery store, which also included the refurbishing operation, training lab, data center. The equipment donation processing, testing, and recycling accomplished in their back warehouse.

Lefty continued to operate his volunteer agency, now inside this larger facility, as he prepared for the future. They installed Windows XP on the refurbished computers, but would eventually receive donated Windows 7 licenses.



Lefty's big idea for this broadband network was to move well beyond providing his customers with a high-speed connection to the Internet. He also wanted to manage these customer computers, as most of these machines were typically horribly infected with malware[163] of all kinds. They knew this from technical support calls, warranty work, and other public repair work they did. This condition was due to the user's inadvertent installation of spyware, malware, and blindly responding to phishing emails and opening bad attachments. Lefty wanted to use software on their servers to *quarantine* infected computers as they connected, to clean them up before allowing an Internet connection to be made. This would also help with the larger issue of the Internet public resource, now open to a mostly uninformed public, and becoming a cesspool of malware and spyware thus diminishing its value to all those who used it. Furthermore, he wanted to roll out software updates that would help reduce these problems. None of these ideas were implementable without a high-speed network connection to the customer machine.

Proposed broadband wireless connection

[163] *Malware, short for malicious software, is a term used to refer to a variety of forms of hostile or intrusive software, including computer viruses, worms, Trojan horses, ransomware, spyware, adware, scareware, and other malicious programs.*

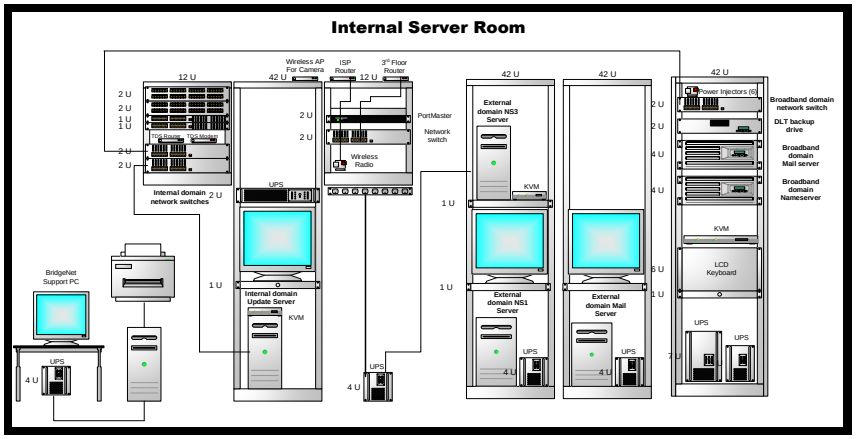
Lefty would explain to anyone who would listen, that the Internet was similar to a city public water supply or public storm water system. You would not pee into public water, or dump waste oil into the storm water system. Connecting a malware-infected computer to the public Internet in his view did precisely this. He was insistent that a public system was a shared responsibility for its users, regardless of what kind.

User behavior has been and continues to be the largest obstacle to a proper operating computer. This did not change much through the decades he worked with computers, and appeared to him that it would take at least a generation, as ATM machines did, for people to understand them. The tech support guys used to joke about the Error 18 problem. That you only need measure 18 inches back from the monitor to find the source of the problem. Computers kept away from humans however, would run for many years without fail.

They also operated their own internal computer networks using donated equipment and some equipment transferred from Lefty's previously closed for-profit business. This also provided the volunteers with valuable work experience not readily available elsewhere, short of landing a job without any experience on their resumes.

While most volunteers were teenaged boys, there were a few girls over the years. One new volunteer told Lefty she went on a job interview recently. The interviewer was impressed with the fact that she had been volunteering while out searching for work, and questioned her on what she learned to this point. She replied she was still new, but she had learned how to use a pallet jack. They all worked their way up from the bottom, including the girls.

They maintained as many as three internal computer network domains, and trained the volunteers as administrators. They ran data backups, did user account maintenance, and performed problem troubleshooting.



Some of the donated equipment they received was enterprise level corporate equipment, network servers, network switches, server racks, etc. This equipment which contained little value for schools or residential customers of the surplus outlet store, was used internally and then later in their Data Center.

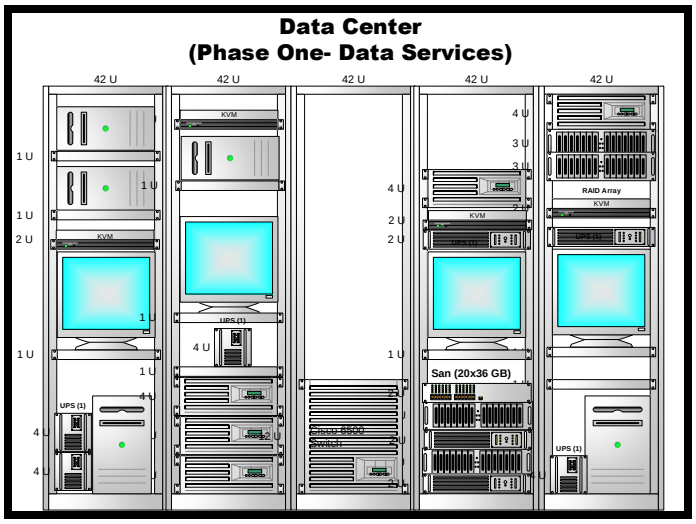
It would have been a shame to recycle this enterprise level equipment due to their inability to find a way to use it for their advantage. This type of thinking also eventually led to the creation of an online sales operation to have a method of moving equipment for reuse, and also generate some supporting revenue. Online sales would eventually total nearly a quarter million dollars over a couple decades.

They setup network servers inside schools, but the schools were ill prepared to manage this equipment and short of funds to hire the work done. Later with the advent of their nonprofit IT Management services, they sought to remedy this situation. They held contracts for IT Management at schools, including the private charter school housed within their building complex, and performed many hundreds of hours work using three staff members, at heavily discounted rates.

As they hit their stride on this school contract, a corporate sponsor of the school hired away his assigned staff using promises of higher wages and benefits. This was a real gut punch for them, as the lack of corporate American morals struck them hard yet again!

Maximizing the use of the resources given them was one of Lefty's primary goals, which led to the idea of Data Center services. In the short term, they would provide data backup, data storage, and FTP[164] services for schools and nonprofit's at about half the going commercial rate. They used their volunteers, while providing valuable work experience, to make use of the donated equipment. Long term, they would expand these services as equipment donations and technical skilled volunteers allowed. They attracted college professors of Computer Information Services and Microsoft Certified technicians as volunteers, but this was never enough, and there was never enough time to train the volunteers.

They had previously began a pilot of a data center but needed to start over after they moved buildings.



The volunteers made up the lifeblood of the organization, and many exceeded expectations, some even walking the snowy streets to volunteer during a blizzard because their car would not start. Across the span of many years, they came and left, yet others always stepped up. They may not have held Lefty's altruistic motivations, but doing the right thing for whatever reason, still amounted to doing the right thing in his view.

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[164] *The File Transfer Protocol is a standard communication protocol used for the transfer of computer files from a server to a client on a computer network.*

For the first ten years, Lefty ran the nonprofit operation *part time* while he continued to run his main custom computer system for profit business, which subsidized the nonprofit's operation. The agency would grow over time into a 16,000 sq. ft. facility and included eight staff, to run programs not just for schools, but also for low-income families. These children also required computers to complete their homework and projects. This effort helped to bridge what was coined the "Digital Divide" to level the playing field for computer and Internet access for all. The BridgeNet operation eventually provided service for several hundred customers. The overall non-profit operation would become a quarter million dollar per year business and he needed to close his for-profit business to be able to run the nonprofit full time. He did this for the next ten years until the national office closed. They then got their own 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and continued this work without missing a beat. The program in the end ran its course due to the massive failure of the national and local economies beginning in late 2008. They never fully recovered from this burden.

Over time, his core group of volunteers, and the hundreds who followed, installed about a dozen computer labs each year. They installed these labs inside private, public, and parochial, elementary and secondary schools, home schools, daycares, afterschool programs, and preschools. Early on when there were just a small number of volunteers, the parents, and teachers from the school would help at the installations, cleaning the units and helping to unload and set them up.

Lefty would buy donuts for the group in the mornings; the school would provide a lunch of pizza and soda, the favorite foods of teenaged boys. Some of the schools would provide their *lunch ladies* to prepare a nice lunch for them.

During the earlier days as the nonprofit came of age, Lefty wrote a manifesto to inspire his staff and volunteers, the public and potential future funding sources. He wrote and posted a framed high-resolution analog paper version inside the lobby of their building, and a digital version on their website.

A Manifesto

As we approach our tenth anniversary, our organizational legs now fully under us and with time to establish and define our role in this community and beyond, we've also found our voice. Starting from a single man, with a single vision and a passion for improving children's lives we are now a team, but more than that, we are a family. We are but a few staff and many dozen volunteers who provide their time along with hundreds of supporters. All dedicated to this emotionally lucrative work, willing to bear any burden, and pay any price to demonstrate this continuously over these years. The work is our reward.

Our simple mission is to bridge the digital divide of access to the skills and to the unprecedented educational and communication tools which the personal computer, and the Internet have developed into over the past twenty-five years. We promote and provide equal access leveling the playing field for all in the competition for jobs and education, providing an equal voice in our participatory democracy to all, both within our community and beyond, regardless of race, employment, or economic status. Our work ensures parents can care for their children, and dream the same big dreams for them that we do.

This document projects our collective voice to those who are listening.

We have never requested handouts, only a hand up as we provide to our clients. We are willing to work hard to accomplish this.

Our primary charitable accomplishments include:

Delivering several thousand computers for schools, nonprofit's and economically disadvantaged families within this community and beyond using our programs

Providing hundreds of hours of phone, email, and carry-in technical support for these units

Providing several thousand hours of computer skills training for hundreds of families and nonprofit businesses

Providing thousands of hours of technical computer skills training to many dozens of volunteers

Diverting hundreds of thousands pounds of surplus computer equipment from our community landfills into refurbishing and recycling

Providing low cost Internet service to many hundreds of low-income families

Our agency has evolved dramatically over these few years

We have transitioned from a personal hobby to an all-volunteer group, then to a volunteer group managed by AmeriCorps Vista volunteers, to a volunteer group managed with paid staff.

Three active volunteers became dozens and then hundreds over these years.

We transitioned from no employees to now seven.

Established and maintained a Board of Directors with a monthly meeting schedule.

Established a financial accounting system, and from no budget to one now approaching a quarter million dollars.

We have operated from three different facilities over time, and have grown from 300 sq. ft. to nearly 16,000 sq. ft.

Have built three extensive internal network infrastructure domains, to support our business operations.

Put in place policies and procedures to guide and direct business operations.

Established a strategic plan for future growth and expansion.

Created staff and volunteer management systems, which continue to evolve and improve.

Put in place a customer marketing system that we continue to develop.

Organized donation pickup, processing, testing, and warehousing systems.

Constructed and operate two completely equipped computer software-training labs.

Established full compliance with State and Federal business requirements.

To support ourselves within this mission, we:

Secured school district contracts worth many tens of thousands of dollars for our services.

Secured County contracts worth tens of thousands of dollars to provide our services.

Secured contracts to manage school IT operations worth tens of thousands of dollars.

Created and operate a Surplus Outlet Store to provide computer systems for the general community.

Created an online auction sales operation for unmarketable donated equipment.

Initiated an Internet provider operation with more than 500 customers providing revenue to support our continuing charitable operations.

Formed a recycling operation with the landfill diversion of 300 thousand lbs. of electronic equipment per year to provide additional revenue.

Built a computer training operation for both public and nonprofit clientele.

Hired a full time Executive Director, with a twice-monthly payroll and health benefits for our community-based staff.

When you step back to view this, these are remarkable achievements accomplished within a short period. We do not aspire to acclaim or praise, only for some support in this work and without acknowledgement of the personal and professional sacrifices involved.

We are here to afflict the comfortable with our ideas, and comfort the afflicted with our efforts. This work is our reward.

Our drive toward achieve full sustainability remains unfulfilled, and may be years away.

We are doing additional work on an ever-increasing scale, searching for ideas to support ourselves in reaching our final goals.

We are working toward obtaining funding for a three-year program to provide our services across the county.

We are working to secure additional contracts to manage school IT operations.

We are submitting grant applications monthly.

We are in the process of rolling out a wireless broadband Internet initiative and planning another for next year.

We are planning a data center operation, to help support other nonprofit's and generate additional revenue.

The key to meeting our challenges are the devotion and discipline to what many believe is the 'trinity' of accomplishing any goal - people, process, and resources. We have come a long way toward building this strong foundation of committed, competent people and developing effective, and efficient processes. We are now turning our "vision" to 'reality' through development of financial and other resources.

We strongly believe funding must be achieved in a manner as to minimize our dependency on outside sources. Given the resources donated to us each day, it is critical to develop earned income in every area of our operations. Only after we maximize income from our own capabilities, would we ask outside sources for assistance. This is a tough but achievable goal, which in our view builds long-term strength and balanced partnerships.

The reality is that the future is bright for us. We are a non-profit group run with the efficiencies and incentives of a for-profit business, the mission of a public service agency, and with the moral zeal of a social service organization.

Executive Director, Summer 2005

Kynthia returns

A few months passed since he and Kynthia had seen each other. With online purchased Red Sox game tickets in hand; he flew out east for a visit, and to watch the Sox play the Yankees at that great old cathedral of baseball, Fenway Park. When he landed, a voicemail from Kynthia explained that she could not meet him at the airport, as she was in the hospital. She requested that he come, so he flagged down a cab to visit her there. She had contracted an ear infection that swelled up her face, apparently due to swimming at a public pool. She was a swimmer, and did so on most days. She would need to stay overnight the slight young Indian doctor ordered, but would be allowed to go home the next morning. A ballgame was certainly out of the question. Lefty bit his lip hard, and handed the tickets to her doctor. He after some protestation and Lefty's insistence, he relented and appreciatively accepted expressing that he would surprise his dad with the tickets.

He spent the night, sleeping in a hospital chair next to her, and then drove her home the next morning. While clearly annoyed from the pain she was having, she stereotypically criticized his manual transmission shifting, and his driving in general. She directed him through the streets of old world Boston, past the Harvard and MIT campuses, and the roads through the historical towns of Lexington and Concord along the way to her town.

He brought a portable cd player to listen to their favorite Warren Haynes tunes, but she was not in the mood. He also previously bought a dozen Haynes cd's and edited them down to burn her a three-disc Greats Hits set, from the best of those compilations. They lounged for the next few days in her rather claustrophobic small apartment.

Then it was time to leave Kynthia and travel back home to work. She both looked and felt better, enough to surprise him with oral sex, and then drive him to the airport. They promised to continue writing and to make-out on the telephone. He left her some funds to tide her over during her recovery, and his copy of Bill Clinton's lengthy book "My Life" to read.

Weeks later, he traveled to visit her again, and she surprised him with tour tickets to Fenway Park. The Sox were playing a road game, but they would walk the ballpark tour and he was able to see the mound where Ruth pitched, and sit for a few minutes in the newly created lottery seats atop the famous Green Monster wall.[165] Homerun balls hit into these seats are known to break the fingers of souvenir hunting fans. He saw the famous Red Seat.[166] They held hands as they walked the perimeter of the ballpark and took in the local color of The Fens[167], and the many ballplayer statues surrounding the ballpark. He touched the statue of Ted, *The Splendid Splinter* Williams, perhaps the third greatest hitter of all time next to Ty Cobb and the *Sultan of Swat* George Herman *Babe* Ruth himself. An honorable mention must also go to the great Iron Man, Lou Gehrig.

Kynthia and he continued writing, though not talk on the phone as frequently as before. She requested stories via email and he obliged. She recently moved to Florida to live with her ailing aunt for a while, but then moved back to her parents Pennsylvania retirement house. She now busied herself rehabbing an old school house as her own place to live while temporarily living in a camper trailer outside. He knew she remained a recovering alcoholic, as he took her to a meeting when she visited him, but he feared she was now *off the wagon* after ten years sober. He deferred from drinking alcohol in front of her at his place, but she did not mind him having a drink or two when out at a restaurant for dinner.

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165 *The Green Monster is the nickname for a 37'2" high left field wall at Fenway Park. The wall was part of the original ballpark construction in 1912 and is just 310 feet from home plate making it a popular target for right-handed hitters. A manual scoreboard is also set into this wall.*

166 *In 1946, one of the greatest Red Sox players to wear the uniform accomplished a feat of mythic proportions. Ted Williams hit a pitch some 502 feet into the right field bleachers – for the longest home run ever hit at Fenway Park. The seat was painted red and sits among a sea of green seats to commemorate the feat.*

167 *The Fens, is a parkland and urban wild in Boston, Massachusetts. The Fens gives its name to the Fenway-Kenmore neighborhood, and thereby to Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox.*

When she requested more stories, he started reusing the ones he sent to his daughter, and he would attach mp3 songs for her to listen to while she read. This was mostly John Prine, Warren Haynes and other stuff he liked at the time.

Kynthia and he talked less and less on the phone these days, and when they did, they argued over stupid things. He wanted to drive out to visit her; but she yelled that she would call the police if he did. She is drinking again he thought, and being ashamed, was now lashing out; but he wanted his old Kynthia back. He wanted her near him, to keep her safe, warm, and dry.

Later she moved back home and opened an antique consignment shop, attended AA meetings including one she called her *Bob Newhart*[168] group, and poured her heart and soul into the store. The local economy had not yet fully recovered from the recession, so the business had little chance of success and it eventually failed. He had sold her a refurbished computer to help manage the business, and some laptops for her friends. She called him each year on his birthday for a while, and then she disappeared. Her phone number and email no longer worked, and he would never hear from her again.

She remained in his memory as a sweet and beautiful dust devil, in the tornadic events that engulfed him that summer and fall. Using the words Stephen Bishop wrote for Phil Collins:

Well I held on to let you go
And if you lost your love for me, well you never let it show
There was no way to compromise
So now we're living
Separate Lives

When he met her, his dad had recently passed, his second marriage had failed after twenty-five years, and he lost his relationship with his 21-year-old daughter. His old school German work ethic took a mental toll and was a factor in the failure of his marriage, his estranged relationship with his second daughter, and threatened his mental health for a short

[168] *The Bob Newhart Show was TV sitcom where the comedian portrayed a psychologist having to deal with a collection of odd patients and eclectic fellow workers.*

time. He abandoned his for-profit business and the hundred hour workweeks that came from running both businesses. His mom was increasingly suffering from Parkinson's disease, and he was transitioning himself to his nonprofit business. In the midst of this turmoil and madness, he managed to meet and court Miss Kynthia, and was a better person for having done so.

By this time, Lefty had built his nonprofit into a quarter million dollar per year business with eight staff and many dozens of volunteers. Their legacy was having placed many thousands of refurbished computers into the hands of children, and just as many smiles on their faces.

Computers were critical for running his nonprofit business. He used them for invoicing, general accounting, payroll, creating advertising materials, flyers, proposals, digital presentations, email, web research, document creation, and user manual publications.

They were essential to his clients delivering academic curricula to primary and secondary level students. They became critical for providing preschool opportunities to young children,[169] and for providing afterschool environments to keep these children away from harmful activities.[170] They became essential for his surplus outlet store clients to have a computer for their children to do their homework, and to help cash strapped business entrepreneurs create businesses in a time of an economic downturn. Computers and the Internet had helped him and many other people further their education online, and stay in touch with the wider world around them.

He sent off another couple of stories to the daughter he always called his little girl.

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[169] *Preschool programs are thought to have a positive impact on the school readiness of children, both academically and socially.*

[170] *A decade of research and evaluation studies, confirm that children who participate in after school programs reap positive benefits in a number of areas including academic achievement, teen pregnancy reduction, and crime prevention, as well as improvements in their general health and wellness.*

My Growing up, Story Five

I have previously told you about our first baseball practice and playing organized ball starting at about age nine. I don't remember much about practices other than always wanting to pitch, and my only competition on our team was a sidewinding pitcher named Billy. He threw the ball with less control than I did in the beginning, and couldn't consistently throw strikes. In this Peewee League, I mostly pitched, my brother caught, and schoolmates filled out the rest of the team.

My foot perpendicular and centered on the pitching rubber, right foot toes deep into the hole dug by other pitchers; I would use a rock and fire windup that was popular during these days. The uncoiling of my body combined with the push-off from my back leg from the rubber allowed me to generate significant force on my pitches to home plate.

I chewed gum while pitching and some cute girls from my school would alternately cheer and jeer me about this and other things, from the bleachers during our games.

The ballfield was up the hill at the mid-level of town between the top of the hill and the lake bay. We would hold our team practices and sometimes play workup games, where which team hit first was typically determined by the now lost art of a bat toss and the scaling the bat hand over hand up to the knob. The winner determined the visiting team, who would hit first. This ballfield sat directly behind

my best friend Gerry's house, and contained two ball diamonds. One corner held the small field containing a fenced backstop, team benches, and a small set of uncovered bleachers where my team both played and practiced. The other corner held the big field where the men from town would play league ball on Sundays where crowds of spectators sat in covered bleachers, and the team in real dugouts. As a young boy, I would chase foul balls for the grownups and deliver them to the hometown dugout and be rewarded with a nickel retrieved by the manager from a cigar box. We would never even consider stealing a ball in those days, despite a good baseball being a rare commodity for us.

When younger, dad would play in some of these games, and one time they played a donkey baseball game and another time, they put a keg of draft beer atop second base. I remember most base hits being doubles during those games. But I was a purest and didn't like these changes to the game I loved.

We played baseball most days during the summer and I always rode my bike to the ball field. Glove hooked on the handlebars on one side, balancing a glass gallon milk jug full of water on the other side, with a bat in one hand resting on my shoulder, and the handlebar grip in the other.

I can vividly recall our first game, because we were to play on the big ball diamond and I wasn't comfortable with the pitching mound. The big field didn't feel right. It wasn't just the other pitching mound behind me, or the longer base paths for the higher level leagues. It felt odd, similar to playing on a grass T-ball field without the traditional infield dirt. It didn't look or feel right. At my young age, the small practice field where I frequently pitched to the plate facing southwest which felt normal or natural, and pitching due south on the big field just felt wrong or unnatural.

Finally, the first game day arrived and I had suffered this waiting period as worse than anything I ever experienced. The exhilaration of game time was one of the best things I ever experienced. I saw to my great surprise and then fear, in arriving for our first Peewee league game that we were to play on the big diamond, apparently the men out of town at a road game. We rarely played on this big field due to the distances of the pitching mound and bases, which now had been shortened. But also because of a certain respect we held for this ball diamond and the older men who played the game there.

My brother and I the battery, with the rest of the gang, Randy in left, Larry V. in center, Gerry in right, Ricky at third, Mark at short, Larry G. at second, Billy at first, took the field. But I nearly pitched a perfect game; no hits, walks, runs, or errors. I say nearly because the last part got me, as

our short stop unfortunately made an error on a ground ball. This sticks with me forty plus years later.

My brother called the pitches from behind the plate, one finger for a fastball, two fingers a curve, known as a deuce for this reason, and three fingers a change of pace. Those days everyone wanted to throw a curve ball, or what was also called an Uncle Charlie, and no one did master this pitch including me. I later found out, throwing curve balls at this early age damages the underdeveloped ligaments in your arm. The closest I came was a two strike sidearm pitch to right hand batters, which would put them on their heels, knees buckling, falling backwards out of the batter's box as their bat waved feebly at the ball. They would yell at me about nearly being hit, but I would yell back to go "grab some pine." I consistently threw this pitch for a strike, with a cross-seams grip on the ball, now called a four-seam fastball. I only infrequently used this pitch because I liked the power of my overhand fastball. They call this a two-seam fastball these days, using the index and middle finger tips on the baseball seams.

In his book Ball Four Major League pitcher Jim Bouton wrote, "You see, you spend a good piece of your life gripping a baseball, and in the end it turns out that it was the other way around all the time."

Pitching for me was not about finesse, just about power. It was about a kid with a stick facing a kid with a rock. It was really all about intimidation. I would throw this five and a quarter ounce projectile as hard as I could, and if they could overcome their fear, I would dare the batter to swing as fast and hard as he could. We would then see who won the day.

The game to me was not about the better team, but about one on one, the pitcher against the hitter. If given my way, no one would ever hit my pitched balls, which sometimes would cause problems during batting practice when I was supposed to allow my team some practice hitting. I ordinarily relented after some complaining, allowing Billy to throw batting practice. I would go catch outfield fly balls, which remained one of my great loves. In the big leagues, pitchers are frequently out shagging fly balls during batting practice. The greatest relief pitcher in the history of baseball would lose a season due to an injury from this activity. I would play right field like my hero Clemente, and throw long toss to home plate.

The first of what would be many games played on the big field and as we got older, the mystique wore off and my main concern became fashioning a decent temporary 45-foot pitching rubber short of the permanent sixty feet six inch one. This remained rather disconcerting and distracting during the game to have another pitching mound behind me, go figure.

Our baseball league played other local small town teams from Reedsville, Valders, Clarks Mills, Newton, Haven, Whitelaw, and Branch. On one of these summer evenings, the team loaded up into several station wagons to travel the twenty miles to play team from Whitelaw, a game that vividly lives in my memory to this day.

Whitelaw, named for the former railroad office, a small Wisconsin town of several hundred people where the American flag flies proudly, and grew up in the late 1950's and early 60's like many others during the post war boom. A place similar to my hometown where the Lions Club, VFW, or Sportsmen's Club would maintain a ball field for the kids to use, and parents would coach and transport the players for the away games. Local businesses, grain mills, lumber yards, Chamber of Commerce's, would sponsor these teams for equipment and uniforms consisting of t-shirts and maybe a few bats and balls if lucky.

The game developed much like any other game, I was throwing my typical speedballs, or hard cheese as it is now called. I recollect lots of swings and misses at my "invisaballs" and perhaps a few hit batters, who dared to or inadvertently crowded the plate. One of these unfortunates once came up to me before the game asking how I was feeling. I replied that I was feeling great. Why are you asking me this? The kid then explained that he wanted to know if I was feeling wild, because the last time they played us I had hit him with a pitch.

I had to explain to him that I own the full seventeen inches of home plate, so it would be best if he just stay off of it. I possessed such precise control over a baseball that I rarely accidently hit anyone. When I was on the mound, I was not looking to make any friends. I threw nineteen strikeouts across seven-innings in a glorious victory that day.

I was allowed to eat ice cream at home after games. I would ice my elbow using a plastic bag of ice cubes, after each game I pitched. This is what the major leaguers did after all. I am sending you a photo of our team. Love, Dad

To be continued…

Our Chamber of Commerce Peewee league baseball team

My Growing up, Story Six

I was selected to play in an All-Star game one year. My parents were not well accomplished at two-way communications, and I just assumed I would be allowed to play this game. They hadn't planned to attend the game, or even allow me to go, I discovered as we drove to a family friends lake house on that Sunday. "Mom, this is the most important day of my life," I cried, and off to the game the whole family went.

Even traveling at a mile per minute, I calculated that we would arrive way too close to game time for comfort.

We played on the big field again, with the uncomfortable pitching mound. I arrived having barely enough time to throw a few warm-ups, and I then realized they would not hold the game for me. The world of baseball did not revolve around even an All-Star pitcher.

Not fully ready, I didn't pitch well by my standards, and didn't want to come out of the game after three innings as tradition dictated. I wanted to do better, but I know that I needed to respect the game, which was more important.

My third year of organized baseball, brought about talk of the end of season tournament, which was the last year I played, before we moved out of our small town. We won enough games to qualify to compete in a tournament in the nearby big city. I don't recall how many games we played, except the last two, on the weekend before the championship game. A sunny August Saturday morning brought about

the prospect of two games in one day. As the Cubs infielder Ernie Banks would often say, "It's a beautiful day, let's play two."

I of course pitched and we won the morning game, in this single elimination tournament. This was a win, or go home event. We were treated to lunch at McDonalds following the first game, 15 cents for a hamburger and 19 cents for a cheeseburger, but still a big deal in those days. After some necessary convincing of my coach, I also pitched the second afternoon game and we won that one as well. The thing that sticks out most in my mind about these games is that during the second one, the other team's fans somehow found out that I also pitched the first game, and they jeered me badly. I was angry about this, as it was the first time I ever heard chants like "pitcher has a rubber arm" and annoying stuff like that, primarily from the adults. I just threw harder, and maybe hit a few kids as retaliation. I was tired and gave up some runs, but our shortstop saved the day in the bottom of the last inning. He hit a ball breaking his bat, but it died a hero as the ball looped over the second baseman's head for a clean single scoring the game winning run. I have no idea on the scores; but many base runners made right turns at first base and hitters at home plate. This didn't matter much to me, as long as we won.

The local newspaper reported that we won the Saturday game and had advanced to the finals by winning a pair of

games on Sunday and that the single winning pitcher had stuck out 38 batters across those three games.

Baseball is the world's most perfect sport I thought, the game never needed to end, until the last out was made and I was allowed to pitch until my arm fell off. On the mound I was where I belonged, in-control and at peace with the world. On later reflection, those fastballs had a lot of anger on them. Anger from the way I was treated at home, by the nuns, and sometimes by the other baseball teams fans.

The next week brought the championship game against the nearby big city team. Our coach was working that night, and my Uncle who now coached the older kids, filled in. This big city team turned out to be big kids who could hit my pitches into the outfield, which our team hadn't experienced much before. The combination of our outfielders inexperience in catching balls hit high and hard, and only being able to see the top of the ball in flight under the poor lighting, meant we were now in trouble. We never played or even practiced at night under lights before. As the game played out I hit a lot of bats; our team dropped a few fly balls and we lost the game. The thing that sticks out most about the game was these kids, though bigger and possibly older, hit my pitches hard. I don't believe I ever gave up a home run during my entire time pitching.

I came up to bat in the last inning, behind a few runs, with a couple of runners on base and two outs. I feared that this might be the end for us now. I didn't concentrate on

batting in those days and my plan now involved trying to coax a walk. Then our leadoff hitter would come up and drive us in. Get'em on, Get'em over and Get'em in, was the classic way to play offensive baseball. Instead, I squared as if to bunt and took three consecutive curveballs for called balls, which earned me the next three fastballs I guess. Since their pitcher had walked the previous batter, the local crowd got on the ump about it, yelling that he was missing a great game. I spit on the next two pitches, one down and away, and the other up and in. The umpire, now apparently hunting for strikes because of the crowd abuse, called them both strikes. Then I took the payoff pitch, for a called third strike and the game ended as quickly as that. Shocked and disappointed; coach later revealed that my mouth had dropped wide open in disbelief. This was most likely one of the few games we lost that year. It has been said that baseball has a way of ripping your heart out and then healing it, just in time for the next season.

On the local newspaper Sports page, below the article about the Yankees climb toward first place under rookie manager Yogi Berra, and above the advertisement for a 1962 Ford Galaxy 500 for $1595, the brief story about the game ended by naming the winning and losing pitchers.

Of course, it couldn't tell the whole story in five lines, of the first championship game ever for this little team from this little town playing these big guys from this big town, in the big city under the lights for the first time. Or even about

this amazing pitcher who helped beat every team he faced in their league, throwing 19 strikeouts in a game while owning the plate and knocking down or hitting many a batter who dared to crowd the dish. And the kid who threw 38 strikeouts, across 21 innings, in three consecutive playoff games to move them into the championship game. Who then in the end took a called third strike as the final batter with runners on base in the last inning to end the game, and their championship dreams.

Oh baseball I thought, it is the perfect game, a reflection of life with its hits and misses, curveballs, and hard cheese. It also measures, and records everything. There is always a winning pitcher and a losing pitcher. That one still bothers me today. Oh! What could have been… Love, Dad

To be continued…

Chapter Ten, Dating Again

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Lefty had not heard anything from Kynthia for some time now and bit lonely, decided to put himself back out there into the dating world again. In speaking with his newly purchased condominium realtor about it, he was advised to skip the bar scene. "Those guys pick out their wives in worst light than I would buy a suit in" he offered. So Lefty decided he would act on a tip from this realtor, and try a newly introduced service which arranged lunch dates for single people.

The realtor, well on his way to becoming a drunkard, also asked him if he ever heard the Garden of Eden story. Being a Catholic schoolboy, he explained that he learned the story in primary school about Eve being made from Adam's rib and the whole picking of the apple thing. "But did he ever hear the prequel to this story, the realtor posed?" Lefty did not know one even existed, so no he replied. "This is the story as it was told to me," he offered.

> Adam became lonely in Eden and desired some companionship. He spoke to God and requested a partner. When God asked for more details, Adam explained that she would need to keep the cave clean, make his meals, take care of the kids, and have sex with him whenever he wanted. God then let him know it would be rather difficult and expensive to provide him a wife meeting all of these criteria. Undeterred, Adam inquired as to how much this would cost him; God explained that this would cost him an arm and a leg. Adam thought about this for a while, and then asked what he could get for a rib? And the rest as they say, is history.

Lefty then paid a significant amount of money to this dating service, underwent a staff interview, and enrolled in the program. These "meet ups" would occur in the city, as his work schedule did not allow him to have lunch dates, so dates were setup for drinks, and then dinner if they both agreed. The first women he met he thought were uninspiring and unattractive; nonetheless, he had brought with him a handmade rose from a local chocolate shop. He continued to work with their staff to refine his date selection criteria, and then on a bitter cold December night he met her. He sat in the bar of this restaurant, early as he had to come a long way, and did not want to be late. She swooped in the door bring in a blast of cold air from the blustery winter night and spotted him, and he her. She presented herself unlike anyone he ever met, flatteringly accessorized in dress, perhaps due to the extreme cold weather, with a penchant for sparkling jewelry bling and a noticeably gregarious personality.

They talked over a few drinks, and since they were getting along, moved into the dining room for dinner. He felt a comfort level with her, perhaps her yin to his yang. Lefty was mostly reserved unless provoked, and at times acerbic, and an avowed pessimist. She however was outgoing, perky, and an optimistic people person. Later she politely rejected his request for a kiss at the bar, as they talked and joked.

The end of the evening came at closing time. He held her arm as they walked down an icy sloped driveway to her car, where she kissed him as a thank you. She told him she was far from home, and her old car had a nonworking heater. Extremely cold outside now and concerned, he placed a checkup call as they both drove home, him south and her west. He reported the outside temperature readout of his Jeep indicated that no degrees existed. She said that she was Ok but he was not, having become smitten yet again.

Later on he managed to convince her she could afford to have a better car, which also provided heat, and which came to be known as the Goldilocks car. Since she was the vice president of the local Chamber of Commerce, at his suggestion she asked a member car dealer to test-drive several different size Jeeps. She drove one home each night, testing in real town and highway environments. She eventually determined the Grand Cherokee was too large, the Liberty too small, and the Compass *just right*. The way this turned out, she would later need the car for her one-hour commutes to visit him.

The Goldilocks car

As an officer in the local Chamber of Commerce, she took him to those banquets. He visited her at her rented duplex, and she took him to the local county fair to see the Beach Boys. She hand muddled his whiskey Old Fashions, and before long moved into his newly purchased condominium, found a new local job, and they became a pair.

As they dated, they saw movies, concerts, and she accompanied him to San Francisco for a computer related business convention. With him being in meetings, she rode a cable car from the hotel to buy an Aidan Mattox banquet outfit at Saks Fifth Avenue on Market Street.

Later they visited the Riverside Theater for a Jackson Browne solo acoustic show. The normally stoic and somber Browne was chatty on this particular evening, as it was his birthday. When a woman shouted out from the audience asking if he would ever record an acoustic album, he claimed that he recorded everything. In fact he joked, "I have you recorded saying that" to the laughter of the crowd. Sensing a receptive host, people shouted out song requests and when someone yelled, "Let him play what he wants." Jackson offered that no,

he gets what he wants often and he would consider their requests. Lefty shouted out "We love you man" to the approving roar of the audience. Later Browne would release two live albums, Solo Acoustic One and Two.

One of these cds included an introduction where someone in the audience requested that he play something for then President George W. Bush. He played Lives in the Balance, the lyrics of which include:

You might ask what it takes to remember
When you know that, you've seen it before
Where a government lies to a people
And a country is drifting to war
There's a shadow on the faces
Of the men who send the guns
To the wars that are fought in places
Where their business interests run
And there are lives in the balance
There are people under fire
There are children at the cannons
And there is blood on the wire

Lefty and his new gal caught a Tony Bennet show together at the same Riverside Theater, and heard what a true vocalist can do. They also saw Mark Knopfler at the Chicago Theater, after a dinner at the Hard Rock Café across the street. On a very cold summer night, they saw him again including his guest Emmylou Harris, at the outdoor Pavilion of Chicago's Northerly Island. Lefty loved Knopfler's unique and touching guitar style and phrasing all the way back to his early days in Dire Straits. Lefty reviled in the fact that Mark played a guitar with a violinist's expertise. They visited the Overture Center for the Arts for a John Mellencamp show, whom he had seen perform in concert thirty-five years earlier when he and John were both the same age. Of course, Mellencamp now seemed much older.

They made a trip to the Performing Arts Center for a Neil Young concert and play, called Greendale. Then again later at the Riverside where Young sat inside a semi-circle of guitars and banjos, an upright piano, with a pipe organ staged behind him. Between songs, he sauntered around and among these

instruments as if asking them which one to select and which song each held within. This was a truly exceptional show, from a guy at the absolute top of his musical game.

They saw a great show performed by the signer/songwriter and former Chicago mailman John Prine at the historic Pabst Theater, where the balcony stairs are as steep as a ladder. Prine was chatty at the show and joked the he recently received a new hip—and his doctor a new car.

They saw Cubs ballgames at Wrigley and they stayed overnight in Wrigleyville sampling the atmosphere of the shops and bars. They sat on the aluminum bleachers at Lambeau Field to watch the Packers quarterback Farve be knocked out of the game, and his backup Rogers played the rest of the game his leg broken by the oft-cheating Patriots. This late November game was a 40-0 disaster for the Packers as Lefty sat next to a guy wearing blaze orange hunting clothing. In casual conversation, the hunter offered that he sat up in a deer stand[171] the previous afternoon and didn't see anything, and joked that now he was sitting here all afternoon but still hadn't seen anything.

They toured the Lambeau Field complex, and he touched the half-natural and half-synthetic turf despite after being told not to by the tour guide. He retained that Catholic schoolchild rebelliousness, and wanted to get his Champion's Tour twenty bucks worth. At his condominium one evening, she showed him how she could relax his sex muscle in ways he could never imagine.

They vacationed in the northern woods he loved, and he showed her the beauty of this area by pontoon boat across the many interconnected lakes.

They rode a car ferry across Lake Michigan, on the 190 foot diesel powered "Lake Express" for a mini-vacation, which makes the trip from Milwaukee to Muskegon in two and a half hours.

They took a Milwaukee River and lake dinner cruise. Lefty felt connected to the great lake where his great-grandfather had settled more than a hundred years earlier.

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171 *Tree stands are platforms used by deer hunters. The platforms are secured to trees in order to elevate the hunter and give him or her a better vantage point.*

They travelled to the nearby Ravinia Theater to hear but not see the Doobie Brothers, as they would avoid the crowded pavilion and partake in the concert inside the gently wooded 36-acre park's surrounding area. Lefty's younger brother suggested the idea as an enchanting place to experience music, and they met him and his wife there. They brought wine and snacks and sat on picnic blankets. Surrounded by people who made a real event of this, they amused themselves watching these people unload couches, recliners, end tables, and candles, bringing a full living room furniture arrangement into the wooded setting.

Signs posted indicated that Ravinia, North America's oldest music festival, presents over 140 different events throughout the summer. These concerts ran the gamut from Yo-Yo Ma to John Legend, to the annual summer residency of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Another sign showed that they canceled the classical music concerts that year because of the emergence of the Cicadas.[172]

Together he and his wife to be bought five acres of wooded land, with the expectation of building their dream log home. They took a summer vacation trip to search for the cedar logs they would need to build their house. They visited a log mill in Eastern Wisconsin, near where he grew up. They visited another in Northern Wisconsin and stayed at a beautiful lake view motel. Then they traveled north to visit Michigan's Upper Peninsula. They toured a large log milling operation, and took a tour boat trip to see the wild beauty of the sandstone cliffs, beaches, waterfalls, and shoreline at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore on what the early French settlers called Lac Supérieur.[173]

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[172] *Cicadas spend most of their lives as underground nymphs, feeding on sap from tree roots, only emerging after 13 or 17 years. The male cicadas have a noisemaker for courtship calls, singing at night to avoid predators. The resultant noise level in the evening can be quite high in normally quiet wooded areas.*

[173] *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is located on the shore of Lake Superior in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The park offers spectacular scenery of the hilly shoreline, with various rock formations like natural archways, waterfalls, and sand dunes.*

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

During this trip they traveled across the eight-mile long Mackinaw toll bridge[174] into northeast Michigan. They toured a small mill that could provide the correct size, quality, quantity and inexpensive cedar logs needed to build their dream house.

Cheered by their success, they traveled to western Michigan and she dipped her toes in Lake Michigan, after having previously done this in Lake Superior, and Lake Huron.

For the return trip, they bought tickets on a car ferry named the S.S. Badger. The old coal fired 410-foot ship, converted from a railcar and cargo ship, now used to carry people and cars from Ludington to Manitowoc in about four hours.

Unusually heavy flooding the next spring delayed their home building plans. The collapse of the economy beginning in the fall that year threatened his business and then eventually derailed their home building plans completely.

In the coming years, they also vacationed at the hidden valleys area of the state, and rented a log home for a week, located within the "Driftless Zone,"[175] an area that escaped the last glacial period. They sampled the local craft brews, tapped into the Wi-Fi network for email access, and shopped in the local village.

They also visited the tourist attractions, House on the Rock, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin, along the way passing through a quaint little town that they would later call home.

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[174] *The Mackinac suspension bridge spans the Straits of Mackinac to connect the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of the State of Michigan.*

[175] *This area that includes SW Wisconsin and the NW corner of Illinois, had escaped glaciation flattening. Because of that, it is known for its rolling hills, valleys, bluffs, and considerable exposed rock.*

The black Goldilocks Jeep turned out to be a noisy vehicle, using a newly designed and operationally marginal transmission design. She later traded vehicles for a newly redesigned and upsized 70th Anniversary Jeep Liberty, after requesting his advice. He wanted her to do the deal herself this time and after some preliminary negotiation, he insisted she take over. The salesman was pushing hard to sell her a very nice looking black Liberty with gold spoked aluminum wheels which he had in inventory. Her heart was set on buying a silver one, however. After some back and forth, in her frustration she queried the salesman as to how things would work out for him, if his wife set out to buy a silver dress but he instead insisted that she buy a black one. He got the point, threw up his hands and relented. He soon retrieved a silver one for her from nearby car dealer.

After a few years, he proposed marriage over dinner inside a rotating restaurant with a lake view, atop a Hyatt Hotel. They married several years later when he surprised her by secretly arranging a wedding ceremony while they were on a vacation. A local Presbyterian minister conducted the ceremony inside a 1860s vintage Episcopalian chapel in Niagara Falls, NY. They lodged on the Canadian side, in a hotel room with full view of the falls, which was lit up fantastically in the evenings.

He authored another story to his youngest daughter.

My Growing up, Story Seven

The small town dead end road where we lived allowed us to play baseball, and ride our bikes mostly undisturbed by passing cars and trucks. At the time we lived there, none of the streets had names; and a horse hitching post remained at the abandoned old bank building down the road. No city water, sewer, curbs, street signs, or any other modern things that are there now. Our road dead-ended at the farmers Co-Op where farmers would buy supplies, machinery, etc. and behind was the patch of woods, I mentioned earlier. A delivery ramp at the Co-op which was used to load trucks became a hill, for riding our bikes down very fast in the evenings. Last I heard, that whole complex was torn down.

The street we lived on ran north to south, and came off the main east west road from the highway down to the lake bay. At the other end of our road was a hatchery for chickens, a few houses, a bar and restaurant for Friday fish fries, a lumberyard, some houses, a grocery store, the old bank building, another bar, our house, then another lumber yard and the Co-op dead ending the road.

Across the road from our house, stood grain sheds with a railroad track behind. The Lakeshore Express train would stop at the nearby depot, and when still young kids, Mom took some of us to the city on this train. At night we would watch out our bedroom window facing the railroad tracks, to count the freight cars. We sometimes counted as

many as 200 or more railroad cars in a single train. We always waiting until we saw the caboose at the end with a guy reading the newspaper by lantern light. We also watched a local kids TV show called Colonel Caboose back then, which is maybe why we became fascinated with the train caboose. We would also hide a flashlight or transistor radio under the bed covers at night, when supposed to be asleep, to read, or listen to Rock and Roll music coming from Milwaukee or sometimes Chicago. Those grain sheds made up part of a larger complex, which ran down along the tracks and close to the road where farmers would buy animal feed, and deliver their crops each fall.

A game called Home Run Derby has its origin in the exuberance of our youth, creatively using the spaces available to us where we lived to play the game we loved. This wasn't unlike the city kids who played stickball among the parked cars on their city streets. Our friends came on bicycle from near and far to play this relatively easy game, with the bases being close to each other on the roadway allowing anyone to play no matter their age.

A playing field was formed from the small yard fronting our house extending out onto the road, using the shed as the background with the RR tracks, a ditch, and another street behind. This large shed contained two roofs, the small one on top called a cupola. We would setup makeshift bases on the road, second base being at the base of the shed, and home plate being at the edge of our yard. In that setting, we

simply played regular baseball, with a few extra rules. Absent any outfield or outfielders, a ground ball was an out; an uncaught ball that hit the shed wall was a single. A ball hit onto the first roof, and rolled back to the road was a ground rule double. A ball that hit the cupola, difficult to achieve, was a triple. A ball hit over the first roof and into the weeds by the RR tracks was a home run, hence the name. This game could be played having as few as five or six kids, as you didn't need another team to play against.

Older and younger brothers, sisters, and occasionally mom and dad would play this game. Gloves became optional, as long fly balls became the main goal. Our equipment was unsophisticated, the balls used would vary based on our particular moods. This ball might be rubber, a rubber coated hardball, a softball, a whiffle ball or most commonly a black hardball for the hard-core ballplayers. The black hardball became a special homemade creation my brother and I invented when the stitched cloth cover was knocked off a hard ball. If you continued using the uncovered ball, the wound string wrapping would gradually unravel until becoming smaller and smaller, with a trailing strand of string following each batted ball.

Our electrician dad consistently carried a good supply of black electrical tape. This tape when wrapped very tightly and repeatedly around the ball would create a durable home run derby ball capable of withstanding repeated trips to and over the shed roofs. The black

hardball however presented some real visual challenges to hit, particularly as the sun was setting after supper.

Our old wood bats frequently broke, and many contained wood screws inserted to repair broken handles. This technique passed from father to sons, and of course then wrapped in black electrical tape the equivalent of today's duct tape.

We kids and the local boys would play this game in the evenings, after supper until dark. But, we first needed to eat all of our food and dry the dinner dishes, before be allowed to play. The house rule then was that the girls would wash, and the boys would dry these dishes.

We never did own many balls, so finding a home run ball in the weeds occasionally became a real challenge, and sometimes everyone needed to look before being found. I never was a big home run hitter, but hit as well as my brother, I guess. Profoundly into pitching now, I would spend hours throwing a rubber ball at the target chalked on the side of our shed. I can still today throw a ball accurately at something a few times until my elbow hurts. I pitched too often in Little League and by the time I was high school age, my arm would hurt badly when I pitched overhand. Love, Dad

To be continued…

Chapter Eleven, The End Is Near

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The economic crash came literally the same month as the grand opening of his nonprofit's newly expanded facility. This included investment of the little working capital they had saved, poured into remodeling and upgrading the building. They now had achieved the security of a long-term lease, as well as future options for facility expansion.

Lefty focused his energies on creating a facility that would serve them for the next ten years, as they had occupied three different inadequate facilities over the previous ten. He never saw the economic crash coming and was far from alone on that. The next several years became a day-to-day struggle, having to pull a proverbial rabbit out of his hat daily to keep the agency afloat. He laid off a few dedicated staff, worked his way out of a long-term lease due to a change in building ownership. They eventually moved to a downsized facility abandoning their investment in improvements, and scaled back their operation significantly. Never enough, they cut off the inefficient building heat saving thousands per month and space heated only the spaces they regularly used. They downsized their Internet connection cost. They extended their line of credit at the bank using a risky personal guarantee. Over the next several years Lefty loaned tens of thousands of dollars to the agency, borrowed thousands from his life insurance, he deferred his salary but nothing was ever enough. The patient kept bleeding red ink.

The local economy caught in a downward slide from the Reagan recession twenty years earlier, the loss of a manufacturing economy or any built-in buffer, accelerated this slide. Long-term multi-generation family-owned business failed everywhere within the county, and the resulting employee layoffs. The lack of vision from community, school, and business leaders over previous decades, came home to roost. Schools and nonprofit's now operated with fewer funds, and private companies cut back on IT support, and eliminated training as being nonessential. Their residential customers who lost their

jobs and their homes had no money for computers. Their corporate and businesses sponsors cut back on and delayed equipment refresh cycles, which cutoff the donated equipment supply. Both revenue opportunities and inventory declined, and then continued to decline. The wheels were now starting to come off. They stopped investing back into the agency, expanded their marketing, and hung on for dear life. However, the business never recovered. Each month, receivables did not meet payables. Building overhead costs became the primary culprit. Now it was clearly well past time to shut down, and abandon more than a decade's work. His lawyer advised putting the building keys on his desk and walking away, but he could not, he had too much of his soul invested. Over more than a decade, he was always able to keep this agency running using his imagination, and the sheer force of his will.

As the economic decline continued, and because they now had a few thousand square feet of available space and some unused donated shelving, he setup a Free[176] store. The space was available due to the unsuccessful launch of their software-training program, and the resultant elimination of staff positions. The store could accomplish a couple of things in his mind, help the depressed population in this economic crisis including the homeless, and possibly drive additional foot traffic into the computer store. This was a poor side of town and the local business traffic declined each year. The free store accepted donations, and the inventory consisted of housewares, furniture, clothing, home decorations, and assorted knickknacks of all kinds. The store slogan was "Drop off something you don't need, pickup something you do need". No electronics were accepted, and recipient volunteers operated the store who provided their work in lieu of an item donation or payment. The store gave away many hundreds of items, saving them from landfills. They operated for a couple of years before they lost the building lease. All remaining items were then given to the St. Vincent DePaul Society.[177]

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[176] *Free stores are stores where goods are free. The second-hand items, which are given away, usually operate with a one-in for one-out–type policy.*

[177] *The Society of St Vincent de Paul is an international Catholic volunteer organization dedicated to helping the poor and disadvantaged, by providing direct practical assistance to anyone in need.*

Then unexpectedly came a miraculous piece of luck. They received news of the awarding of a cy-près[178] fund distribution due to a Static Random Access Memory (SRAM) Antitrust Litigation in California. Essentially this meant rather than using lawsuit proceeds to issue refund checks for a few dollars each to millions of people, the court would distribute these funds to qualifying nonprofit agencies. The requirement was that each recipient agency was required to have a government certified charitable mission, and an operation in which computer SRAM memory played a role. Some memory chip manufacturers had been caught in a price fixing scheme, and then settled the resultant class action lawsuit. The award came from this California court judgement.

Their share of this award, amounting to tens of thousands of dollars, which allowed them to settle their debt obligations. When the agency finally closed years later, the agency was free of any debt obligation residue. Lefty had borrowed heavily from his own personal funds and retirement investments to keep the agency afloat, but now was mostly made whole again. He did however have to sacrifice several years of deferred salary compensation.

It seemed only fitting that corporate price fixing corruption within the computer industry would play a role in helping them provide computers for those without. Yes John Lennon, time does indeed "wound all heels"[179], Lefty mused.

Towards the end of life for his nonprofit, but before the lawsuit distribution was assured, Lefty spent a hard-earned thousand dollars of agency money to buy a full-page advertisement on the back page of the local newspaper. This was a last gasp for his dream to try to find a way to survive.

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[178] *The cy-près doctrine is a French legal term, which has its origins in the law of charitable trusts and translates to "as near as possible". This doctrine, is typically applied in class action settlements in the US, when the original objective of the settlement becomes impossible or impracticable. This doctrine allows amendment of the terms to be as close as possible to the original intent.*

[179] *When Lennon won his precedent setting deportation appeal, after years of court battles, he received a Green card certifying permanent residency. When asked by the news media if he held a grudge against the Nixon administration, he responded with his usual cleverness stating that "time wounds all heels", as Nixon had been forced to resign under threat of impeachment a few years earlier.*

Dear Community Employer

I along with the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers request a few minutes of your time to outline our organizational goals, present our challenges, and ask some questions. This letter serves to project our collective voices to those who are listening.

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit volunteer organization, founded locally in 1995, which seeks to bridge the Digital Divide by providing computer and Internet technology access with skills training to children and families.

Our community-based mission is bridging this gap, or Digital Divide, of access to the skills and to the unprecedented educational and communication tools the personal computer, and the Internet have become over the past thirty years. We promote and provide equal access to level the playing field for everyone in the competition for jobs and education. We help provide an equal voice in our participatory democracy to all, both inside our community and beyond regardless of race, employment, or economic status.

What We Do and Why We Do it:

In 2007 within this county, approximately 14% of the general population lives below the poverty level and 6% of the general population lives 50% below the poverty level. These approximately 13,000 people are living in poverty inside the county seat. Eighty-four percent of this population are single-parent households. The youth population, ages 0-19, living below fifty percent of the poverty level amounts to approximately 3,000 children.

The advanced Geographical Information System or GIS study performed by local university students under professorial guidance, determined that a majority of our clients live within the city's lowest-income census tracks 1-5. We estimate 90% of our current clients are low-income individuals or families living below the poverty level.

According to the local literacy council, this county has second lowest literacy level in the entire state. Fully 25% of the adult population, or about 35,000 adults, are rated at the lowest measured literacy level.

According to the 2003 US Census, approximately 141,000 adults live within the city. Of these 141,000 adults, approximately 24,000 are without a high school diploma and approximately 11,000 are currently receiving unemployment compensation.

The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, provided by the Department of Education, reveals among other things:

1. There have been no significant increases in U.S. adult literacy from 1992-2003
2. Quantitative literacy skills are higher
3. Results show a strong correlation between literacy and education level attainment
4. As literacy increases so does the percentage of the population who are fully employed.(adjusted for the current economy)
5. Median weekly earnings also rise from higher literacy levels

Proudly born here in this county, we continue to serve this community as economic conditions have deteriorated over these years as unemployment rose to near double the "new normal" 9% statewide rate.

We are but a few staff, but we are many dozens of volunteers who provide their valuable time and we are also many hundreds of supporters. All of us dedicated to this emotionally lucrative work, willing to bear any burden, pay any price, and to embrace the professional and personal sacrifices necessary to demonstrate this continuously over these many years. The work itself is our reward.

Specifically What We Do:

Programs that deliver and fund our mission:

1) The PC's for low-income families program is directed at reducing the "digital divide" by placing personal computer systems into the homes of qualifying families, including Internet service, training, and support.

2) The Computer Lab in a Box program provides computers for training labs for schools; private, public, parochial, daycares, preschools, afterschool programs, homeschools, and nonprofit organizations.

3) PC's for Students program provides qualifying high school and college students with a laptop computer, training, and support.

Services that both convey and fund our mission:

1) Our Surplus Store provides low-cost computer systems to the public, non-profits, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses

2) Low cost computer repair services, upgrade, data transfer and data recovery services to the general public, schools, and non-profit businesses

3) Low-cost group and individual training services to the public who cannot afford the rates offered by private businesses

4) Low-cost computer recycling services to the general public, schools, non-profit organizations and businesses

5) Our IT Management Services provide for on-site support for computer systems which includes network design, installation, troubleshooting and repair services

This Is What We Face Now:

No other agency within our state collectively provides the programs and services previously outlined. The local and national economies over the past several years have negatively affected our operations despite lowering overhead and dramatically cutting costs, including staffing. We once again lowered our cost recovery prices, but we still face a reduced ability to deliver our programs and services. This is primarily due to the lack of funds available to those needing our services; as well as the toll unemployment has taken on our store customers. As a result, we are facing a budget shortfall of approximately 20% of our annual budget for 2010. Your help can assist us to continue our much-needed work to support the delivery of programs and services as the economy improves, but the demand will remain in the years ahead.

Over 15 years, we have received support from the United Way, The Community Foundation, Rotary International, various religious and business groups, the Lighted Schoolhouse Program, the Workforce Investment Act, as well as some private contributions.

Over these years, we have successfully collaborated with city, county, local technical college, university, Chamber of Commerce, and county redevelopment authorities in an effort to form the necessary partnerships to improve our ability to deliver our programs and services. Grant funding is no longer a viable option due to the recent political and economic climates, and our current ineligibility due to our often misunderstood yet critical social entrepreneurial self-sustaining business model.

What Help We Are Looking For:

We are not looking for handouts, only a hand up as we provide to our clients. Under our business model, we operate under a self-sustaining approach to provide our programs and services on a cost recovery basis. We ask for help only when absolutely necessary.

Now due to our overwhelming need, we choose to seek assistance from the city's largest employers. We need help to sustain our existing infrastructure built over the past fifteen years, which allows the continued delivery of our programs and services.

The current economy makes complete self-sufficiency for a non-profit such as ours extremely difficult. We are looking to obtain 20% budget funding, with the remaining 80% provided by our self-supporting earned income. We desire the initial contributions made within 60 days, or the end of the first quarter 2010, with ongoing support throughout the 2010-2011 budget years.

Why Should You Care?

The work we do is not just about computers or technology. This is also about economic equality, social mobility, social equality, democratic societal participation, as well as local economic growth. This work helps to ensure this community's parents can care for their children and continue to dream big dreams for them.

Our work over these past years has positively affected many thousands of children and families within the city and county wide. Many of them are your employees, and most are in the low-income category.

We have also been assisting the employers of this community in providing asset reuse, distribution, and recycling for many years now, essentially on a gratis basis.

What You Can Benifit

We are able to offer you the following benefit menu for your support:

1) An opportunity to engage in strategic corporate citizenship, to make a difference in the community where you operate, and in which your employees live. You can continue to make money while also making a difference. You can do well, by doing some good.

1) Computer asset recovery, distribution, and recycling

2) Seats on our Board of Directors, to assist us in delivering and targeting these programs and services

3) Company branding, website, promotion, press releases

We believe the key to meeting our challenges is devotion and discipline to the requirements of accomplishing any goal; people, process, and resources. We have followed a long path, building a strong foundation of committed, competent people to develop effective and efficient delivery processes. We now wish to continue to translate our 'vision' to 'reality' through the development of financial and other resources. We strongly believe funding be achieved in a manner that minimizes our dependency on outside sources. Given the resources donated to us each day, it is critical to develop earned income from all areas of our operations. Only after maximizing the revenue generated by our own capabilities, are we willing to ask outside sources for assistance. We believe that this tough but achievable goal, builds long-term strength and balanced partnerships.

We are a non-profit group, run using the efficiencies and profit incentives of a for-profit business, the mission of a public service agency, and the zeal of a social service organization.

I can assure you that without the necessary community based support, we will need to transition into a much smaller and more limited organization providing significantly less than 50% of our current capabilities to deliver programs and services to this community.

Can we count on you to develop a partnership with us?

1. How are we placed on your charitable giving cycle, is there an application process for us to be considered for donations?

2. To whom can we send an information packet, further explaining our organization and our fully certified financial details?

We can work together to flesh out the details of a partnership, measuring both inputs and outcomes, dependent on a specific funding commitment. These contributions are of course tax exempt. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely, Executive Director - Spring 2012

"Providing the tools and the skills to use them. That is our job one here!"

The extensive message for this advertisement, edited to half, further refined, and then edited to half again to fit the one newspaper page at a readable type size. The response from the community was crickets, as he had feared. There was a continuing failure of the business community to understand that the untapped assets of the community would be what would move the county out of a thirty-year economic and social decline. Those assets were its people and to Lefty and his group, making those kind of investments was the only reasonable way forward.

The local economy would not improve by catering to the tourists in the downtown area by installing Cobblestone sidewalks and old-fashioned street light poles, nor with art contests for downtown merchants. This would not improve by providing amenities like a swimming pool for the out of town boaters at the marina, nor by renovating old factories into artists' lofts. To Lefty, these actions represented the city of Belle, having forgotten its subterranean railway roots, and failing to evolve from the historic, traditional, and entrenched habits of bigotry, racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Overcoming these meant that this would perhaps take some additional generations to achieve a full resolution. City leaders failed to learn the lessons of other Midwest deindustrialized towns whose investments of hundreds of millions of dollars, resulted in utter and complete failure. It was *people* after all is said and done, not buildings that mattered most. Investment in people was the key in Lefty's mind from his long experience.

These urban failures mirrored mistakes made elsewhere in Flint, MI, and other so-called Rust Belt cities.

He continued writing stories to his youngest daughter.

My Growing up, Story Eight

I was a Boy Scout, an Altar boy, and an All-Star Little League pitcher. Pretty much the quintessential All-American boy I guess, but not viewed that way by my parents nor the nuns at my school however.

I joined Boy Scouts, because most boys my age did, and because my brother joined. What struck me most about Boy Scouts were the boring meetings in the church basement. Evenings spent tying knots in a rope, trying to do whatever necessary to earn merit badges for your sash. This for the most part bored me, but partnering with my best buddy Gerry, we found plenty of mischief and quite a lot to laugh about. Camping out, which we seldom did, was interesting to me because I loved being in the woods and the inner peace that this brought me. We did campouts, and one time we camped overnight down at the big lake once and the parents needed to come and pick us up during the middle of the night in a rainstorm, because they became worried our campsite would wash out. Our Scoutmaster had brilliantly placed our campsite on a steep hillside above the lake.

The ultimate in scouting meant going away to scout camp for the summer. A couple weeks away from parents and family, with the opportunity to learn some new mischief from the new boys you met there. I didn't really enjoy scout camp, sleeping in pup tents, hiking, mosquitos, and a stupid uniform of shorts, knee socks and garters. I didn't care much for the structure, discipline, and

organization, which I also later disliked in the Army. I was however able to buy frozen candy bars in the camp canteen. "Do you want a male or female Hershey bar? What I said? With nuts or without", the older boy explained.

The scout leaders also made some feeble attempts to teach you how to swim. Throwing you off the dock into the lake didn't work for me, and I never did learn to swim well, but I liked exploring underwater using mask and snorkel.

Moving to the city before I turned 13, I felt lost not having any of my oldest friends around. I didn't enjoy Jr. High school or my classes, except for one taught by a weird bow tied science teacher. Picture Bill Nye the science guy. The school was intimidatingly big, the pace too fast, and the kids too cruel. I got a Beatles LP album for my 13th birthday and I remember that I didn't want anything else. When I got back home, I was horrified to find an Al Martino record inside rather than the Beatles, and I needed to bring the vinyl back to the store for exchange. I eventually owned every Beatles LP and later replaced the worn out originals, due a penny taped to the tone arm to keep the needle from skipping. As replacements, I bought exported versions, which came directly out of Europe and used higher quality thicker vinyl. I matched these to the high quality Pioneer turntable I brought back from Korea, and this provided excellent sounds through the strong base levels of my Kenwood speakers. The songs on these albums didn't match the American versions; since the American record

companies held back songs for subsequent additional LP's. There was some early indications to him of corporate greed at work here.

In the big city, I would sometimes walk over to the Piggly Wiggly grocery store near our house, to buy magazines containing stories about the Beatles. One time I bought a Beatles 45-rpm record out of a vending machine for a dollar. The song was Paperback Writer, with Rain on the B-side. I later bought more Beatles records on the inexpensive 45's, including Day Tripper and We Can Work it Out. Finally, I bought Strawberry Fields and Penny Lane while the whole world waited the five months after the Beatles quit touring and went into the studio, to create what would become the Sgt. Peppers LP. This was before 45's fell out of favor, and lost out to LP albums in the later 60s. I spent many hours in my bedroom of this house, listening repeatedly to all of those Beatles records.

Our house sat on an intersection where three city streets converged. At night during summer, we would hear car crashes at the intersection after the stoplights changed from controlled to flashing. This house held the four boys in two double beds in one bedroom and the four girls in two double beds in the other. A baby crib in Mom and Dad's room was typical. Later my older sister slept downstairs in the sunroom to allow room for one of the younger girls. We played in our small yard, but mostly used the grass fields and ball diamonds at the nearby junior high to play sports.

I ran a paper route for a while, which I delivered early mornings before school. I had tough going in the dark of winter, trudging through snowdrifts on the sidewalks and streets before people shoveled and the plows came out. The route contained few customers, and those were spaced city blocks apart. As the Don McLean lyric goes, "February made me shiver with every paper I delivered". I did earn some money that I later used for Beatles records and car magazines.

When I turned 15 ½ I obtained a temporary driver's license. Dad somehow acquired a couple old broken French built moped scooters, and we fixed one up using parts off the other. I would drive around town, as the scooter was inexpensive to run and fun. This became less fun after they required helmets to ride. The traveling helped me to learn to navigate the city and came in handy when I needed to travel across town for driver's education road classes.

My brother and I got busted one time. After playing cards with our buddies at a nearby park, I gave him a ride home a few blocks away. Of course, a cop was nearby and he busted us for riding double on a temporary license, which we didn't realize was illegal. I received a traffic ticket, the first of many, before I even got a real driver's license.

We moved from the small town to the big city because my dad was offered the opportunity to take over an existing business, made possible with some outside funding from

another dealership. The former farm and industrial equipment business was started and operated by a couple of local farmers who had allowed the place to run down over the years as they lost interest. Dad would occasionally meet with this outsider funder, and I would accompany my dad to these meeting, some distance away, as they typically also involved picking up equipment. I would sit outside the office to wait, and there would be loud voices coming out of the room, and perhaps some scapegoating going on. The five-year experiment failed for a number of reasons, none of which were related to my dad's effort or motivation.

After that experience, my dad moved the family out of state to run a company store successfully for another company and parlayed that work into a regional sales manager job, from which he retired, twenty years later.

From this first teenage experience, I would come to understand the difficulty bringing a rundown business back to life. I created and ran two separate businesses for twenty plus years, both from scratch, having anecdotally learned this lesson.

On Friday nights and Saturdays from ages 13 to 16, I worked for my dad at the tractor shop. He didn't pay my brother and me, but sometimes bought us a soda from an old horizontal vending machine. First, I swept floors and cleaned bathrooms there. The older guys working there would tease me calling me "Colonel of the Urinal", which made me mad. Later I was allowed to go out on pickups

and deliveries, and was able to fix a few things. I would also mix calcium chloride to pump into tractor tires for ballast, from inside a big cow-watering tank, and remember the taste of the salt dust in my mouth. I would steam clean old tractors coming into the shop for repair and the trade-ins. I did this filthy and wet work year-round including the freezing cold winters. Later on, I would paint up the used tractors for sale. I routinely drove tractors, equipment, and the pickup truck around the lot and learned how to drive fairly well.

Dad never let me work on equipment in the shop for insurance purposes, and this bothered me because I was instinctively mechanical even as an early teenager. By this time, the hand tools of wrenches and ratchets were simple extensions of my hands. One time however I was able to help save the day. I was sent to a Minneapolis suburb partnered with a summer college intern named Howie who did the driving. Together with Howie or "The College Kid", as he was known around the shop, we took the shops Ford cab-over flatbed truck for the three hundred mile trip to pick up some new unassembled tillage equipment. Late in the afternoon on the way back, the truck heavily loaded, the old truck overheated and blew a head gasket on the big V8 gasoline engine. We pulled into a gas station that was about to close, but the guy there kindly ran a trouble light outside for us to use. We carried tools along because this was just that kind of truck. After some convincing of Howie that we

could do this ourselves, he hitchhiked to an afterhours dealership parts department and bought the parts while I disassembled the engine. He got back in time to help put the engine back together using the new gaskets. We slept inside the truck overnight and drove back home the next day. This was a real coup in my mind, but dad being dad, there was no real acknowledgement, much less gratitude expressed.

My dad would sometimes let us drive to and from work before we were old enough for a license. My brother and I drank beer with the guys after work, before the legal age of 18. I liked to hang out there with one of dad's workers, who I looked up to as a big brother. He recently got out of the Army Reserves and was cool, I thought. He would pick on me a lot because of my being just a kid, but I liked him regardless and learned a lot about growing up, foul language, dating, and a bigoted point of view, so things both good and bad. Dad paid us a dollar per hour after we turned 16, but by then I was ready to obtain my work permit and do something else. Dad and I didn't get along during this time and when I turned 16, I got a job at the Gulf gas station for $1.15 per hour and a year later managed a pay raise to $1.25.

I would hang out at this gas station in my free time because I thought this was a cool place, and one day the boss said that as I was hanging out there so often, I might just as well work there.

Junior and senior year in high school I would work up to 40 hours a week at the station, for $40 pay after taxes. Frequently, I would work noon to midnight on Saturdays, 10 to 10 on Sundays and then 3 to 11 a couple nights during the week. All the money, and I mean all, was spent on buying car parts. Working at the gas station was fun in the summer where I would sit outside; some buddies would come over, shoot the bull, and stop in before and after their travels and dates. They bought gas and I helped bring a lot of additional gasoline business there. I gave certain cars what I called a "high performance" discount on premium gas, as a marketing tool to get more business from them.

Of course, my boss didn't agree as he thought kids scared away grownups who would spend a greater amount of money. Truth be told, at times the guys did burnouts at times using their cars from one end of the station lot to the street. We did get into some typical teenaged mischief.

Starting at a stoplight down the street, the distance to the viaduct overpass just past the station was about a quarter mile. We often saw drag races and near collisions as cars would race by, trying to beat each other to the lane change where the street narrowed from two to one lane onto the overpass over the railroad tracks.

I saw myself as a car guy or also called a "gear head" in those days, and I enjoyed the challenge of learning and remembering where the filler caps resided, on the different model cars. This was unlike now, where they are all pretty

much on the left side behind a door. Those days it may have been behind the license plate and you'd need to reach way down there, or behind a tip-up taillight, or on the right side with the owner parking the left side of the car next to the pump. It was maybe under the front hood on a VW beetle, or near the back window on a Corvette or Jaguar. Some used inside release latches, or a key lock and you needed to get a key from the driver. These became a real pain in the butt as they froze up due to ice, rust, or the road salt.

I worked hard at the station painting up the place, cleaning the big windows, floor and shelves, but my boss, nick named King who was born with one deformed hand, didn't appreciate me much. The big threat was always to "watch out for Blackie" the regional manager, as he would fire you on the spot if he didn't like you. I worked hard pumping gas, washing the car windows, checking the oil, and airing up the tires if requested. I also sold cigarettes, oil, antifreeze and other things. I took credit card payments back when you needed to run them through an impression machine on a carbon paper receipt kept back inside the building. I would then need to run this back out to the car on a clipboard for a signature.

At one time, Gulf gas stations advertised a promotion on TV where they promised to service your car within 60 seconds of arrival, and they put a huge stopwatch in the station window for people to time me. I typically worked alone and needed to cover three islands of two pumps each,

so up to six cars at a time. Occasionally while you serviced another car, the pump nozzle valve would stick and gas would flood all over the ground. People would yell at me if I didn't arrive within 60 seconds, and if I didn't check their oil, and their tires, and wash every stinking bug off their windshield which they pointed out from inside the car.

I carried a big wad of cash in my shirt pocket and a coin changer hanging from my belt for making change. I learned how to handle money and calculate change doing this job, as I paid for shortages out of my wages. I would typically sell about 500 gallons during a 12-hour shift. Gas sold for 25 cents a gallon, and putting $5 of gas into a big Cadillac or Lincoln then was a big deal. We all thought that those guys were rich. Now I easily put $60 into my Jeep.

Another thing I loved about working there, was ordering delivery of excellent Italian beef sandwiches, and great thin crust pizza from the Italian place downtown. Having plenty of cola to wash it all down, this was my teenaged diet back then. Love, Dad

To be continued…

My Growing up, Story Nine

The first car I bought, a 1964 Ford Falcon Sprint, was a sporty version of the inexpensive economy car model viewed then as being an old people's car. The V8 engine version made the Falcon perhaps the first subtle muscle car out of Detroit, because of the horsepower to weight ratio. My car was a black two-door model having a full-length yellow stripe on each side between two chrome strips, which formed a V shape. I bought the car from a repo company, for a few hundred dollars of paper route money. With a missing transmission, a tow with the help of one of my buddies was needed over to get the car carcass over to our house. I parked it on a concrete pad behind the house next to the garage, where I went to work on fixing and upgrading.

Before I bought that car, I had gone to a junkyard to buy an engine to soup up. I removed the internal parts, as I would replace them, and got the bare engine block cleaned in acid bath. I worked on that engine connected to a new engine stand I had purchased, and bolted on the new external parts on there in our basement furnace room. I bought the parts as I earned the money to afford them. It was still empty of any internal parts however, because I couldn't afford to buy them. It looked cool, despite the fact it didn't yet run. I would build my first computer twenty years later, in a similar manner.

One weekend with Mom and Dad out of town, I decided to push the Falcon under the clothesline pipes and pull the old engine out using a borrowed chain hoist. The Falcon came with a 260 V8 engine, and I wanted to install the souped up 289 I was in the process of building. Unfortunately for me, they came home early and in seeing the engine hanging from the poles, well this was the beginning of the end of me working on my car at home.

I then rented a one car garage over on the other side of town, from an elderly lady and continued to work on this project over there. The garage being too narrow to open the car doors inside, I took them off and stored them up in the garage attic. Working now closer to my girlfriend's house, she would visit me when I worked, and I would visit her over at her parents' house. That is how your older sister ended up being conceived. I met this girlfriend at a stock car race at the speedway, during the summer, and we dated as high school seniors.

I would work at the garage late at night after working at Gulf, and work until the early hours of the morning. Late at night, out of the house of too many children and too much noise and chaos, is where I felt free in having no one else around. I walked at least a couple miles there from the Gulf, but I guess I never minded I didn't own a bike. I would stop and eat a great steak sandwich frequently on the way home at a restaurant, and play the Rolling Stones on the jukebox. One of my high school classmates worked there, and the

next time I saw him I was coming out a bar in Korea. He was walking in as I was walking out, as the Springsteen lyrics later said. We sat down, drank a few beers, and talked about the olden days in high school and at the restaurant.

After I graduated high school, I bought a black 1950 Ford pickup truck to haul parts and tools, and to drive around while I continued working on my car. I bought it from an older guy I met at the Gulf station who had installed a V8 engine from a Thunderbird, and twin silver exhaust pipes which came up behind the cab. The truck was cool to look at, and could burn rubber in each of the three gears. Most importantly, having this vehicle to drive let me focus all my efforts on the Falcon.

While still in high school, dad would let me use the shop truck belonging to the tractor dealership. My brother got the family white Pontiac station wagon, and I the 1952 Chevy

dark green pickup truck, having a six-cylinder engine and a three-speed steering column stick shift. This truck also used a floor push button engine starter switch, rather than a key start. I would drive that to the stock car races Saturdays and the drag races Sundays. Working on cars and watching car races, was most of my life during the time from high school until I was drafted. I was motivated enough to buy a pair of binoculars and a stopwatch to track the cars at the stock car races.

I eventually put that engine in the Falcon, but this car would never hit the street, which life and Nixon had conspired to prevent. Love, Dad

To be continued…

Chapter Twelve - Windows 8

C:\novel\chap12\type win8.txt ↵

Recently Lefty began testing the Windows 8 Consumer Preview CP, and used the Microsoft online forums to report back to Microsoft. He participated in discussions with the other forum users, giving their feedback about the beta level software. A CP was a newly created category, which introduced a departure to from the usual progression of software development. General information was provided on the "Building Windows 8 Blog". The initial reaction in the forum was rather poor. Never before had Lefty seen such repugnance for the most basic level of the Windows software, the user interface or UI, itself.

Windows 8 - Not for my desktops and laptops. "Use page up and page down keys if you don't have a touch screen"

Question | 1 Need Answer | 50 views | 0 Helpful votes | 3 replies

Asked June 6, 2011 by lilbudger

Windows 8 - Not for my desktops and laptops. "Use page up and page down keys if you don't have a touch screen"

lilbudger asked on June 6, 2011

I have seen the videos posted for the new Windows 8.

Every minute I heard "Optimized for the tablet." I am glad windows 7 seams stable, or desktop and laptop customers would be in trouble.

Touch this - push that. "and if you don't have a touch screen you can use the page up key and page down key to scroll up and down on the page." i guess that qualifies for being able to use this OS on cross platforms.

I can picture my mouse in my right hand then reaching across keyboard to hit page up and down, instead of holding a coffee.

Microsoft is not going to sell this to the masses. This will be their biggest failure.

I do not need to see anymore videos or hear any more about it. I guess I'll be waiting for Windows 9 while i try to reinvent the wheel.

You would think that their first video unveiling would be something remarkable about the product.

More fluff.

This might be Microsoft's biggest failure-yet.

windows 8 only for tablets?

Question | This question is answered | 2474 views | 4 Helpful votes | 15 replies

Asked June 4, 2011 by Patrykvd meulen

Strelak replied on September 18, 2011

I have taken a look at your Windows Developer Preview for windows code named Windows 8 as you so desire to call it. Tell me. How does this help the Bussiness Environment? The look tells me that this is geared more to the stay at home computer people that only use there computer for Facebook, twitter, Email and the other chat programs they like to use. Also this is great for people that don't know how to use a computer running any other version of windows, Point and click an icon is nice if your not useing this for bussiness use but please .tell me you have something else in mind for windows 8 bussiness.

A_Shepherd replied on September 21, 2011

I am pretty disappointed with this early version of Windows 8. A major problem I've noted - Getting to the shutdown or restart seems to be inconsistent. A lot of trial and error is needed to get to the settings page. There's too much guesswork. The menu setup is not intuitive.

I realize Microsoft wants a system that can be used on PCs and tablets. Suggestion - Use the windows button to toggle between the different formats. Make sure that

restart/shutdown is easy to get to, not buried further down some menu. I started with Apple in 1980 and Windows in 1992. You are forcing people with a wealth of experience on prior systems to start at ground zero. From a business economics standpoint that is foolish. From what I see, Windows 8 looks like Vista all over again.

Tracy Winfield replied

Now that windows 8 is no longer pre-beta everyone should agree that it is by far the worst operating system ever devised by mankind. Given my choice I would rather use Millenium.

Windows 8 will be the downfall of Microsoft. If ever there was a reason to join the " I " army (apple douche bags) windows 8 is it. Everything the pc lover holds dear seems to be gone or hidden within an os for phone.

I love my android phone but I do not want my phones os on my pc.

Hey microsoft I usded to hope apple would go out of business now I guess when I decides to purchase a new laptop I will have to consider a mac book. It just made me nauseous to say that outloud.

In the Windows 8 forums, MS so aggressively pushed back against this dissent and advice from experienced users that many finally departed the forum. They conceded that MS had been giving them good products from 1990 on, and should know what they are doing. They did feel a lot like Tantalus, however.[180]

This beta test consisted of three pre-release versions between 2011 and 2012. The formal introduction came at the Computer Electronics Show CES, which Lefty watched via a webcast. The operating system was released to manufacturing RTM, on August 1, 2012, with general availability GA, on October 26, 2012.

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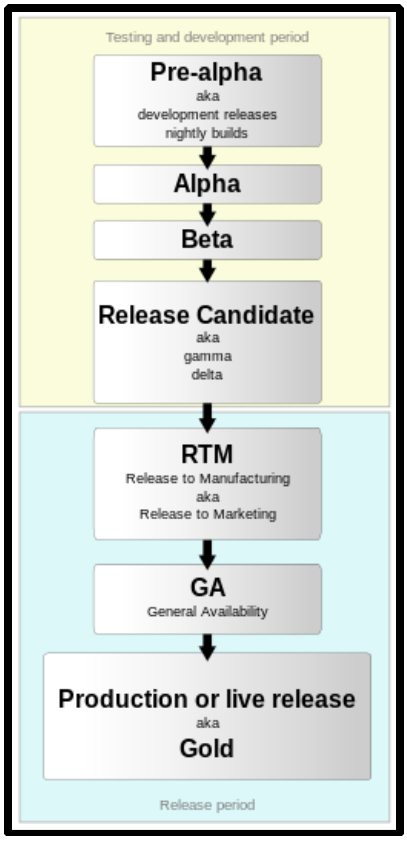
[180] *Tantalus, a Greek mythological figure, was most famous for his eternal punishment in Tartarus. He was made to stand in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches, with the fruit ever eluding his grasp, and the water receding before he could take a drink.*



Traditional software creation progression

Windows 8 introduced major changes in the operating system's platform and user interface to improve its user experience on tablets, because Windows was now competing with mobile operating systems, like Google Android and Apple iOS. These changes included:

- A touch-optimized Windows shell based on Microsoft's "Metro" design language
- The Start screen (which displayed programs and dynamically updated content on a grid of live tiles)
- A new platform for developing apps with focus on touchscreen input
- Integration with online services (including the ability to sync apps as well as settings between different devices)

- Windows Store, an online store for downloading and purchasing new software, now called Apps
- Support for USB 3.0, Advanced Format hard drives, near field communications, and cloud computing
- Security features, such as built-in antivirus software, and integration with Microsoft SmartScreen phishing filtering service were introduced
- Support for UEFI Secure Boot on supported devices with UEFI firmware, prevented malware from infecting the computer boot process

Microsoft had unveiled additional Windows 8 features and improvements on the first day of its Build conference, September 13, 2011. Microsoft released the first Windows 8 public beta build, Windows Developer Preview (build 8102), at the event. A Samsung tablet computer[181] was distributed to attendees at the conference with this software build, for use in code development. Lefty took to heart the following guidance coming from Microsoft:

> *"…we strongly recommend that you experience Windows 8 on similar hardware, as it was designed to run for the majority of consumer experiences. The most important reason is access to the rich experience powered by accelerated graphics, and the fast and fluid operation that you'll experience when running this way."*
> *"The following system has been using widely in our internal testing and self-hosting:" •Samsung Series 7 slate*

[181] *Lefty received one of these tablets under his Christmas tree that year. Santa's note indicated that he had been an exceptionally good boy, although Mr. Claus did anticipate that Lefty would remain on both of his lists, for the foreseeable future.*

On February 29, 2012 at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, Microsoft released the Windows 8 Consumer Preview to partners and press. This was a beta version of Windows 8, build 8250. Along with other changes, this build removed the Start button from the taskbar for the first time since its debut in Windows 95. According to the MS Windows manager, the Start button was removed to reflect their view that now on Windows 8; the desktop was an "app" itself and not the primary interface of the operating system. Windows president Steven Sinofsky, who would later leave the company in the wake of the market place failure of the Windows 8 release, claimed 100,000 changes were made since the developer version of the software was first made public.

Bloggers indicated their displeasure.

> *Windows 8: A Giant Misstep Forward*
> *I've been playing with the Windows 8 Consumer Preview since it was released, and have gotten very familiar with it. While I find Metro to be a pleasure to interact with, I'm convinced that Microsoft is about to make a mistake with Windows 8. In short, I have a feeling that Windows 8 is about to become the new Vista.*
> *Metro is actually a great operating system / UI layer, and Microsoft deserves a lot of credit for innovating in a space that has become somewhat homogenized. It's fast, slick, and fun to use. But if there's one thing I'd like readers to take away from this post, it's this: Metro should not be a replacement for the desktop, and does not belong on laptop or desktop computers.*

Experts drew similar conclusions as the beta testers.

Windows 8 — Disappointing Usability for Both Novice and Power Users

Windows 8 UX: Weak on Tablets, Terrible for PCs[182]
By Wayne Williams BetaNews, Inc.
The situation is much worse on regular PCs, particularly for knowledge workers doing productivity tasks in the office. This used to be Microsoft's core audience, and it has now thrown the old customer base under the bus by designing an operating system that removes a powerful PC's benefits in order to work better on smaller devices.
I have nothing against Microsoft. I happen to think that Windows 7 is a good product and that Windows 8 is a misguided one. I derived these conclusions from first principles of human–computer interaction theory and from watching users in our new research. One doesn't have to hate or love a company in order to analyze its UI designs.
I'll stay with Win7 the next few years and hope for better times with Windows 9. One great thing about Microsoft is that they do have a history of correcting their mistakes.

Several weeks later, this research report made news. The research was there, for MS to ignore or reject.

Windows 8 UI 'strategic mistake,' argues design guru
Jekyll and Hyde operating system weak on tablets, terrible on PCs
Gregg Keizer (Computerworld (US)) November, 2012
"That was the true strategic mistake, that they could do 'one Windows' on both tablets and PCs," said Jakob Nielsen, a usability expert with nearly 80 U.S. patents to his name. Nielsen, one half of the consulting firm Nielsen Norman Group, was formerly a top-level engineer with Sun Microsystems, and has a Ph.D. in human-computer interaction.[183]
"Windows 8 has low usability, amazingly low usability," Nielsen said in an interview Monday, ticking off a host of problems with the UIs of both the "Windows 8 Store" interface - formerly "Modern," before that "Metro" - and the "Classic" desktop that's a revamp of Windows 7.

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[182] *The Nielsen Norman Group conducts user experience research and evaluates interfaces of all types.*
[183] *His partner in the report, Bruce "Tog" Tognazzini, was Apple Computer employee number 66 for fourteen years.*

The Windows 8 public release had a mixed reception. Although reaction towards its performance improvements, security enhancements, and improved support for touchscreen devices viewed as positive, the replacement user interface became widely criticized for being potentially confusing and difficult to learn. This was specifically true when used with a keyboard and mouse, rather than a touchscreen.

The Windows 8 introduction venue

Image Courtesy: Microsoft.com

Lefty watched the webcast at his office, which lasted about an hour. Their highlights, were identified.

- One million Windows 8 Consumer Previews downloads in a single day, today on Launch day; Sinofsky says there have been 16 million installations of pre-release builds, amounting to a total of 1.24 billion hours of testing.
- Windows 8 is launching with 1,000 certified computing devices (Ultrabook's, tablets, and convertibles.)
- Today is the grand opening of the Windows Store for Windows 8 apps in 231 markets in 109 languages. The number of markets is important to the strategy of Windows 8, of "Computing for the next billion people".
- Windows RT: apps available in the Windows Store. It works with 420 million existing peripherals like mice, keyboard, printer, cameras, drives, etc.).
- Demos going through the Windows 8 interface: IE10, Xbox Music/Video. Some whoops came from the audience, when told the OS resulted in a 30 percent speed boost.
- Windows 7 launched exactly three years ago today.

- Demos of a number of the devices to show how the Windows 8 experience scales across different designs: The Lenovo tablet with stylus, the Dell XPS all-in-one with the 27 inch screen, the 19 inch Sony all-in-one.
- Demos of some of the best apps in the App Store: Wikipedia, Urban Spoon, Hulu, Netflix.
- More hardware demos, the Surface tablet is mentioned
- Steve Ballmer casually takes the stage and says, "Yeah, I'm excited," like he clearly believes in Windows 8.
- Windows 8 PCs are the best PCs ever. For the first time, Windows has first-rate tablets in addition to desktops and notebooks. Some of them are powered by ARM CPU chips from Qualcomm and NVidia, some by x86 CPU chips from Intel and AMD. An advancement that pushes the boundaries of what a PC is, and that is touch?
- Microsoft has gone "All in" with its app strategy, Ballmer says. This includes Office, Bing and Bing Apps (news, finance, travel, maps, weather, and sports), Internet Explorer, MSN, Outlook.com, SkyDrive, Skype, Xbox Music and Xbox Games. Ballmer also highlighted the total redesign of MSN specifically for Windows 8.
- Ballmer speaks on the business enterprise world and Windows 8, he promised updates to everything soon.
- Windows Phone 8 comes on Monday.
- Windows Reimagined.
- Ballmer closed with "Welcome to the world of Windows 8", and without any music or fanfare, left the stage.

The view from the audience

Image Courtesy: Microsoft.com

From experience, Lefty knew that Gates used to exude his confidence often saying, "They bet the company" on this product. Gates and his bold reassurance were now gone from MS.

The event did not reveal anything unique, just info about Apps, hardware, and the overall Windows 8 experience. Lefty wondered where is the Windows 8 that included the Cairo, Blackcomb, and Longhorn improvement promises made for Vista and XP? This is very disappointing indeed.

Lefty thought of history repeating itself as after the 1969 moon landing, most of the NASA engineers had set their sights on a landing on Mars. However, NASA opted for the safe route, and built a space truck, a Shuttle for low earth orbit, rather than exploring the outer reaches of space. Nixon strikes yet again.

Microsoft apparently lost their way and could no longer generate the ideas, the will, or the ability to be bold. On the other hand, perhaps now holding a monopoly sales position in desktop and laptop operating systems, there was no strong reason to gamble the money, and take the risks of continuing to innovate. They replaced a beautiful two-dimensional shaded interface with a depressing one-dimensional flat interface, rather than innovating to create a three-dimensional system. They gave up on the relational file system idea of WinFS as being too difficult to do, and too far ahead of its time to put into a product. They pulled early test versions of WinFS out of beta products not once, but three times previously. They tempted us, but never followed though. They made us feel as Charlie Brown must have in kicking the football.[184] They thought this dream was now over.[185] MS must have lost their will to find and hire the right people, to create innovations like the Start button, Task Bar, and the Media Center application.

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184 *The football gag was featured in the comic strip, Peanuts. Lucy tells Charlie Brown she will hold a football while he kicks it. Charlie Brown refuses to kick it, not trusting Lucy who then persuades him to trust her. He runs up to kick the ball, but at the last second, Lucy removes the ball, and Charlie Brown flies into the air, falling down flat on his back. The gag ends with Lucy pointing out to Charlie Brown that he should not have trusted her.*

185 "*What's this lying around shit? Wars over? What? "Over"? Did you say "over"? Nothing's over until we decide it is! Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor? Hell, no! And it ain't over now. 'Cause when the going gets tough... the tough get going! Who's with me? Let's go!" Bluto's speech in the Animal House movie.*

Lefty experienced that MS stopped innovating in application software as well these days. The basic word processor concept structure did not advance sufficiently from the original Bravo Project at PARC, which had evolved into MS Word. Users remain locked into a walled garden of text on pages and primitive editing organizational, manipulation, and rearranging tools like cut and paste. These tools remained based on the simulation of paper, only now in a digital Internet age. Editing and re-editing remained as the most important tools for writing and document creation, and text structure is perhaps the most important element to writers and publishers. Adding a ribbon bar to Office programs was a dubious innovation many people still do not want, now nearly a decade later. Worse than that, they took away the editing programs users depended on like MS Picture Manager, and then did not replace them with anything. This mimicked what they did in previous Windows versions.

Back in the forums, people were posting spoofs for years now, criticizing Microsoft's lack of innovation in Windows.

Microsoft-built computer spoof

Lefty was now building computer systems of up to twelve processor cores, (24 threads)[186] 64 gigabytes of memory, and 3 terabytes of storage. It seemed a shame to him that for the first time, the lack of operating system software development meant that the OS could not fully utilize all this new hardware power available to it. This had never happened before, and quite the opposite had been true since the beginning of the PC.

An early Multi-core processor chip

Image Courtesy: Intel.com

Press reviews of Windows 8 were mixed, and reported that although Windows 8's emphasis on touch computing is significant, this focus also risked alienating desktop and laptop users. A "tablet PC" with Windows 8 makes an iPad feel "out of date" due to the capabilities of the operating system's hybrid model, and increased focus on cloud services. One article explained that this effort showed signs of Microsoft "flailing" and another condemned the Metro-style user interface. Later, users referred to this interface implementation as a *Metrocity*.

Windows 8 goes off a cliff

186 Hyper-threading is used to improve parallelization of computations (doing multiple tasks at once) in computer processors.

Many of the included Windows 8 apps were seen as just too basic, and lacking in functionality. One journalist wrote while its user interface changes may overshadow them, Windows 8's improved performance, updated file manager, new storage functionality, expanded security features, and updated Task Manager reflected positive improvements. He also praised Windows 8's duality towards tablets and traditional PCs, as an "extremely ambitious" aspect of the platform, but then criticized Microsoft for emulating Apple's model of a closed proprietary distribution platform when implementing the Windows Store.

In October 2013, Microsoft released the Windows 8.1 update to address aspects criticized by reviewers and users, and to incorporate improvements to various operating system components.

After the 8.1 update, Lefty used his tablet for light web surfing and reading digital books, and was just OK for that purpose. He also installed this version on a SFF[187] touchscreen PC located in his kitchen, and used the Media Center Edition to watch the news while he ate his morning Wheaties, and at lunch as he watched Gunsmoke or Bonanza reruns. The OS also worked just OK in this environment; his remaining PC's continued to run Windows 7 64-bit versions however.

For the first time since 1990, "newer didn't translate to better" from Microsoft, making people stay away in droves. The value was just not there for most users, versus anticipated issues with hardware drivers, and software that would need to be replaced, purchased, or added. This OS became viewed as unsuitable, for those and the other reasons. Sales of new computers would take a nosedive and never recover.

Lefty was concerned if MS could correct itself with the next version of windows, but was optimistic in spite of everything, that they could and perhaps would.

[187] *SFF is an acronym for a Small Form Factor PC.*

Windows 8 also disappointed many that so little had been done to advance the state of the art regarding privacy and encryption.[188] The Internet continued evolving and had become more dangerous for both computers and users. Some wanted Microsoft to develop and implement an easy system to use PGP encryption for email security.

Cryptology pioneer Phil Zimmermann

Phil Zimmermann was the creator of Pretty Good Privacy PGP, the most widely used email encryption software. Lefty had first met Phil while he worked for IBM and was attending school in the evenings. Phil was earning his B.S. degree in computer science in Boca Raton. He later moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, and they kept in touch during his brief internship at Intel in nearby Santa Clara. He once told him that the definition of a Nerd was "someone who had found something more interesting than sex."

Phil wrote the popular Pretty Good Privacy or PGP program, then made available including its source code, through public FTP[189] for downloading. This was the first widely available program to implement public-key cryptography. Shortly thereafter, the software spread uncontrollably via the Internet.

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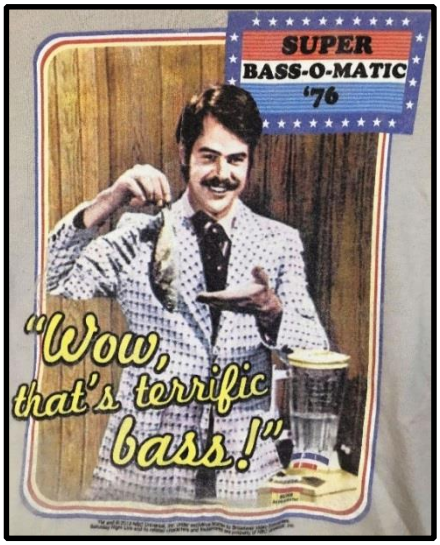
188 *In cryptography, encryption is the process of encoding a message or text in such a way that only authorized parties can access it. The intended information or message, is encrypted using an encryption algorithm, generating ciphertext that can only be read or accessed if first decrypted.*

189 *The File Transfer Protocol (FTP) is a standard network protocol used for the transfer of computer files between a client and server on a computer network.*

The first PGP version included an encryption algorithm developed by Zimmermann; that he called Bass-O-Matic[190].



The SNL Bass-O-Matic

After a report from RSA Data Security, Inc., in a licensing dispute regarding use of the RSA algorithm[191] in PGP, the United States Customs Service initiated a criminal investigation of Zimmermann, for allegedly violating the Arms Export Control Act. The United States Government regarded cryptographic software as a munition, and thus was subject to arms trafficking export controls. At that time, the boundary between cryptography permitted "low-strength" and cryptography impermissible "high-strength" for export from the United States; put PGP on the too-strong-to-export side of that boundary. The investigation lasted three years, and pretty much destroyed Phil financially and emotionally for a time, but then the case was dropped without the filing of any charges. The boundary for legal export of software was later raised, and now allows PGP to be exported.

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190 *The name is explained in his comment in the source code: "BassOmatic gets its name from an old Saturday Night Live skit involving a blender and a whole fish. This algorithm does to data what the original Bass-O-Matic did to the fish."*
191 *An algorithm is a self-contained sequence of actions. Software algorithms perform calculations, data processing and automated reasoning tasks.*

The government dropped its case without indictment in early 1996, and Zimmermann founded PGP Inc. to release an updated PGP version. After acquisition by Network Associates (NAI), Zimmermann stayed on as a Senior Fellow. NAI later decided to drop the product line, and PGP was reacquired from NAI by a company called the PGP Corporation. Zimmermann then served as a special advisor and consultant. Symantec later acquired the PGP Corporation. Zimmermann is a fellow at the Stanford Law School's Center for Internet and Society. He is a principal designer of the cryptographic key agreement protocol (the "association model") for the Wireless USB standard.

A 2013 article titled Zimmermann's Law, quoted Zimmermann saying, "The natural flow of technology tends to move in the direction of making surveillance easier, and the ability of computers to track us doubles every eighteen months". His words became prophetic later that year in the wake of documents released by Edward Snowden, published by Glen Greenwald and others regarding the NSA's massive surveillance of the American people and others worldwide.

Lefty continued sending stories to his youngest daughter, but he knew these might be the last.

My Growing up, Story Ten

After a high school graduation ceremony I didn't attend, I kicked around the idea of attending technical college, but I needed to work a lot as I was supporting myself and making wedding plans. My older sister used a religious scholarship for college, my older brother a sports scholarship, and I had nothing. I left high school having few options, and wasn't really prepared for further schooling or work. I worked at a discount auto center, but I couldn't abide how crookedly they did business. The boss would park a car on the alignment rack, go have coffee only to come back and drive it back off, charging the customer for a service never provided. Finally refusing to receive sales commissions from gouging and cheating customers by installing unneeded and nonsensical replacement parts, I quit. I then worked my butt off at a tire store, installing snow tires, brakes, shocks, and exhaust systems. I worked shooting metal studs into new snow tires, at times on snowy days having cars lined up down the road for a half mile waiting for them.

We married on a cold and snowy March day, and the baby came in early August. Later I also worked at a car dealer washing and waxing new cars, and then at a gas station on the third shift.

The following summer, I was making plans for community college in the fall when I got my "Greetings"

letter from Uncle Sam in June, told to report in July. After a long bus ride, I woke up in Missouri for Basic Training.

After Basic, my advanced training consisted of electrical wiring, outside wiring, pole climbing, and electrical generator operation. During late summer, me and my buddy Houser, hitchhiked to a drag strip on the Illinois side of St. Louis over the weekend and were punished due to our late return with barracks latrine duty, which wasn't much fun. Picture in your mind, Forrest Gump and Bubba in the movie, cleaning the barracks floor using toothbrushes. Then I came back home briefly on leave and then off to Korea on Thanksgiving Day. Imagine eating an airplane turkey dinner for your holiday meal, not good at all. When I left out of Travis Air Force base in San Francisco, two lines of guys extended out to the tarmac. The volunteer guys in the left line wearing jungle fatigues flew to Nam and the other guys in the right line with me were wearing green fatigues flew to Korea. In August or September that year, Congress finally shut off money for the war and no draftees would be sent to Nam. As long as I didn't volunteer, I would not go. Thankfully, I already learned a valuable lesson about not volunteering for anything in the Army.

Initially Korea was similar to a prison gang job, and I was assigned to a construction-engineering outfit. We rode out to the job sites in the back of an open dump truck in the winter. We used picks, shovels and a jackhammer, to carve

a ditch out of the frozen dirt along a road up the mountain to the helipad, near Incheon harbor on a missile site. Sometimes I would stay onsite overnight, to tend the heater that would keep the concrete from freezing after being poured. I would get the next day off, which I thought was a good deal, because I was free in the daytime. At this site, I would hear gunfire from the DMZ at night sitting in the guard shack atop this site.

Things got better later in the summer, when we upgraded a security dog kennel on another site. We ran water, electricity, and such. I rode in the trucks, and drank lots of beer the whole time. At one worksite I ran the generator, its primary purpose was to keep the beer cold in the fridge outside our tent. Dirt floor, no heat, cold-water showers, but by some means we had procured a refrigerator. One time the brass came visiting forcing me to throw a tarp over the frig as camouflage, and string up some "security lights" to justify the running generator.

I was first at a little base called Camp Mercer near Kimpo airport and not far from Seoul. This was a small Army camp and being new there , I was scared to death at being assigned to pull night guard duty on the fence line. I also pulled duty tending the heaters for the concrete "lincoln" logs we made for another job site. We would build these "lincoln" logs up in vertical squares against the side of a mountain, filling them with quarry blast rock using a crane. This was supposed to prevent the side of the

mountain and the road above from washing away down into the motor pool. We covered the whole thing with dirt when done and then planted some grass seed. This is probably still there, now some forty years later.

I can also recall standing guard duty in the motor pool building with a funny little Mexican-American guy from Los Angeles named Escalante, and me being given the captains .45 pistol to guard the weapons truck in the motor pool overnight before we moved south to a new base. Camp Humphreys a newer and larger base, contained larger cement block barracks that looked like college dorms. Bunks, closets, desk, throw rug, and a desk lamp all now part of the new volunteer army, but this was lost on this draftee. We lived four to a room, including me, Jackson (Jack), and a guy whose name I don't recall, but I do remember that he would bang his head against the cement block wall at night, and also an empty bunk. Not long after, the head-banger was reassigned. "Jack" was from Georgia and was a real southern character. He hated the taste of beer, but loved the effect. He would drink beer by counting 1, 2, 3, aloud, and then chugging a glass or bottle. I looked him up and we did lunch a few years later when I was in Atlanta on my way to Africa for Peace Corps. He was working in his dad's business and doing just fine. Another time I also stopped in to visit another buddy from Korea also named Jackson in northern Minnesota, on my way to Canada for a vacation. His job in Korea was as a lifeguard

at the base swimming pool, and he loved the village girls. I didn't do much at Camp Humphreys in the way of work, although I was there when we traveled to watch the Bob Hope USO show at a nearby Air Force base. The USO show was impressive, and the next best thing to being home I thought at the time.

On my 21st birthday, I traveled to Pusan on the southernmost tip of Korea for a leave. I traveled by bus with a Korean friend, ate no American food, and spoke no English. I came home just before Christmas, and I brought lots of gifts with me.

Afterwards I then needed to leave home again, for Fort Bragg, North Carolina for about five months to finish my two-year service commitment. I finally flew down after toying with the idea of buying a car and driving. I drove a dump truck there, and worked on trucks in the motor pool. I rode to Myrtle Beach with buddies over a weekend to attend a beach carnival. I remember having to drive back as our buddy kept falling asleep. I remember listening to Mike Oldfield's mesmerizing Tubular Bells soundtrack from the movie, The Exorcist, coming out of the tape deck. I also saw my first rock concert in a gym at Fayetteville. The Chambers Brothers, famous for a tune called Time, played as the warm up band for Steely Dan, who rarely toured before or after that. I bought a car down there and thought about driving home in July, when I got out on my next birthday, I also thought about buying a motorcycle, but that

is another story in itself. I was denied an "early out" which many draftees received. I was denied for Army transition training, and the appealed this up the chain of command without success. This might have been caused by my draftee attitude, but the early release option was a "no go" for me.

While on base we played a lot of glow in-the-dark Frisbee in the evenings. We all liked the vending machine in the dayroom that served jumbo-sized cans of beer, and we frequently listened to the McCartney Band on the Run LP which has just been released. "If we ever get out of this place". This became my theme song, as I was getting ready to get out of the Army on my 22nd birthday. After 23 months, and 29 days, in the military quasi prison. Love, Dad

To be continued…

My Growing up, Story Eleven

After the Army I attended college part time evenings while working during the day. I did "B" level work for the first time since elementary school. I learned what my public high school education hadn't provided me. I enjoyed Psychology 101, Sociology 101, Art History and Appreciation, and particularly writing, and literature. I learned to write well there. I received a rather unique post-secondary education I believe, having classes of 20 or 25 students and PhD credentialed teachers. If I would have gone straight to the university I would have had large lecture hall classes, taught by teaching assistants.

During this time, my disillusionment with the world as I saw in the Army and in the news caught up to me, and made me restless to do something idealistic before transitioning to a career. I signed up with the Peace Corps to work in West Africa to help feed the people of this starving continent.

After some language and cultural training, I traveled to the north of the country to work for, a French corporation named SO.DE.RIZ (Society for the Development of Rice Agricultural) as part of an agriculture improvement project. This agency was involved with the introduction of three levels of agricultural technology into the country. I worked for my dad as a teenager at his farm equipment business, so I knew some things about the operation,

maintenance, and repair of equipment and diesel engines from this experience and what I gained in the Army.

After about six months of working with the local office, I was unable to find an alternate placement in a situation I deemed more suitable, I eventually decided I simply would no longer participate in the perpetuation of this continued colonization. The last straw was when I learned that in addition to everything else, SO.DE.RIZ was charging the farmers $4.00 per hour for my time teaching them how to maintain and repair the equipment. This effectively ensured I would have no real success in the project. When back home I wrote a letter to President Carter, explaining my experiences, how my hopes were dashed, and perhaps my own slightly naïve disappointment in the general state of the world. I did receive a response from the Director of Peace Corps, saying yes he heard similar things from other returned volunteers, is "new to the job" and that they were "working on it".

Peace Corps, which began as a good idea under Kennedy, had now devolved into a tool of the State Department under Nixon and apparently was being used as a sweetener to foreign aid packages. "We'll sell you 100 tons of wheat at a good price, and throw in a couple of Peace Corps volunteers," I imagined the negotiation going.

I later graduated with a teaching degree Cum Laude.

Back now from the Dark Continent via JFK airport, I helicoptered across an amazingly illuminated NYC and

seeming endless lights at night to land at LaGuardia, and caught a flight home to visit family. The temperature 80 degrees when I left, and minus 20 degrees when I arrived home. By luck, my brother thought to bring me a coat to protect me from this 100-degree temperature swing.

I then lived in a small country town, and rented a one-bedroom house which had been converted from a garage. The old couple I rented from had since built a new house on a corner lot in front with a Quonset hut in back for him to work on stuff. He was an inventor of sorts I guess. I liked living in small towns, similar in appearance and feel to where I grew up. At one point, I took a Transcendental Meditation course at the local university town. I used these techniques to calm and prepare myself for evening study. I received my secret silent chanting mantra and continued to use these techniques over the years to reduce stress and to help me sleep. I dated a little bit and later found a steady girlfriend who worked as a waitress at a restaurant in a nearby small town. She lived at home with her mother, in a house without plumbing or electricity.

I saw many concerts during this time on campus. I saw McCartney for the first of three times; including your first concert, saw Jackson Browne/Phoebe Snow, Robin Trower, and Harry Chapin.

I met your mother at a Christmas party, we fell in love, I gave her a ring, and she moved in.

Sometime during early winter the next year, after graduating college and landing my first job, we packed up a rental truck to head north to a rented house (shack) which was affordable. The weather was clear when we left for the four-hour drive, but as we traveled north, the weather got progressively worse. This was when weather forecasting wasn't that great. I was determined and stubborn perhaps, to press ahead with me in the truck and your mother in her little Mercury Capri following in tracks I made. The snowstorm got worse and worse and by the time we got close, the east west roads were plugged tight with snow and we couldn't drive where we wanted to. After going up to an on-ramp to have a look at the possibility of going west and deciding not to, we headed back down the off ramp to rent a motel room in town for the night. The ramp was drifted shut but I thought I would plow my way down to the highway but couldn't, and got the truck stuck tight in a snowdrift with your mother behind, also stuck. We walked into town to discover the motel rooms, and the church basements full of stranded travelers. We ended up staying with an older couple and their young kids in a nearby farmhouse for a couple days, until the plows caught up with the snow. This turned out to be a real adventure on our first of what would be many moves together.

That is all for this year. As these stories get closer to real time, they are harder to tell. Love, Dad

To be continued…

He sent off another couple of short stories to his daughter. Only now, this time, he would personalize them to be about his memories of her growing up, rather than his own life stories.

Your Growing up, Story One

On a bitter cold early December day, your mother woke me for the midnight trip to the local hospital.

Once checked-in and settled in the birthing room, I tried to hold her hand and work the contraction breathing techniques we learned in the Lamaze classes taken earlier. She sternly told me I had done quite enough already, and to get away from her. I crawled into the adjoining bed and slept through most of the subsequent labor, which she later never let me forget.

When it was time, I was allowed into the birthing room, unlike for your sister's birth a decade earlier, where I sat nervously among the other men in the waiting room.

Holding your mothers hand, I watched through a mirror as the doctor delivered you, him first making a scissors snip, and the accompanying blood flow leaving me faint, near the point of passing out.

You came out blueish and the doctor held you up and pronounced you a "keeper". I watched as the nurses put you on the warming table to count fingers and toes, and perform the Apgar tests. You quickly turned red under the heat lamps and then settled into a more normal pink color.

You wouldn't nurse for a few days and I was a bit distressed, as you would also gag on a bottle nipple. Your older sister didn't nurse and instead took right to a bottle. You never did take a bottle, or a pacifier, so I missed this chance to bond with you during the feeding times that I did have with your sister.

In due course, you took your mothers breast and there was no going back, as you would continuously score near the 100th percentile in weight at your checkups for the first couple of years. You had tootsie roll arms, legs and multiple chins, but remained both chubby and healthy as a baby.

On another frigid day when we brought you home from the hospital, we had you dressed in many layers of clothing that it was difficult to get you buckled into the car seat for the six-block drive home.

Your feeding relinquished to your mother, I would get up when you cried during the night and take care of what I called the business end of the baby. I changed your cloth diaper, being cautious with the safety pins, and powdered your little bottom. I would talk to you, tell you stories, and later sing silly songs like Old McDonald's Farm with you. I would then pass you off to your mother in the rocking recliner for your feedings, and go back to sleep.

I took a weeks' vacation for your birth, not fully appreciating that you wouldn't do anything other than sleep and eat, and there was little for me to do. I ended up

working in the basement, building a training aid to use for my technical training classes.

Since your grandparents lived 600 miles away, I made a "Day in the Life" video to send to them. I bought a newly introduced video technology called a camcorder to take videos of you as you grew up. The camcorder allowed the recording tape to be installed directly into the camera so you didn't need to also carry what effectively was a VCR in a pouch connected to the camera. This device was easy to use and transport.

I wrote the title, actors, scenes, and credits using a black sharpie on a roll of paper towels and I rolled it out in front of the camera lens to open the movie and as transitions between scenes. The film showed your day from wake up, to feeding, to bath, to diapering, playtime, and napping. Over the years, I made many dozens of these tapes through to you being a teenager. Later, now having a Sony Handicam, I made your wedding video which I digitized to a 9 GB double sided DVD which included scene transitions and a background music soundtrack. This was before a recordable Blu-ray drive was available to me.

As a baby, you would coo and giggle as your mother bathed your multiple chins and "tootsie roll" arms and legs with you lying atop a towel on the kitchen table. Later you would have a plastic seat with suction cups and a seat belt for bathing in the bathtub, since you cried about bathing in the kitchen sink.

You remained healthy and happy, and you liked to sing. You wore bib overalls, because you couldn't tolerate the elastic waistband of pants due to your tummy.

Your mother stopped working just before your birth, and didn't resume work until I was transferred to another job, when she took on some part-time work. You never had a babysitter until you grew to about two years old. You didn't get sick until going to daycare, when you got your first ear infection. You also inherited the same earwax buildup problem that I experienced when I was little, and I needed to take you to the doctor to have your ears cleaned. I would call this getting the potatoes out of your ears, and you giggled one time when you plugged up the doctors suction machine.

We would watch baseball games on television when your mother was shopping and you would either sit on the floor surrounded with pillows, or scoot around the house in your walker chair. You migrated right from that chair to walking without crawling. You discovered that your legs worked to walk at around nine or ten months, and I can remember cringing at watching you bounce sidewall to sidewall down the bedroom hallway in our ranch house, before you completely got your balance.

You took your first steps out in the front lawn barefoot, the grass tickling your feet. You flew on your first airplane with your mother to come and view houses that I picked out for our move. We stayed in a hotel room and I bought you a

light up Glow Worm toy to help keep you from being scared at night.

When we moved because of a job transfer, the house we bought was a tri-level having the two bedrooms on the third level. The moving company moved us in, and I can still picture you helping your mother unpack canned goods to put them in the cupboards. When done you wanted to take them back out and repeat the process again. That must have been a fun game for you.

You still slept in a crib then, and your mother used to put you down for a nap and shop the stores on weekend afternoons. I would be in the lower level room watching a baseball game, working in the garage or something, and I would hear you wake up a couple hours later singing, "Daddy, I want to get out" repeatedly. If I didn't come right away, you would add a "Right Now!" to the end of that song.

One Sunday morning we shopped for your first big girl bed. We brought it home and I set it up in time for your afternoon nap. When you woke up, you sang your usual song and when I went up to retrieve you, you were sitting in the middle of your bedroom floor appearing confused. I explained that you didn't need me to come up and get you anymore and you can now climb out of bed and come downstairs and find me. I will never forget the look of wonder in your eyes at me revealing this new freedom to you. You took a few tumbles down those steps but there were only three and they were softly carpeted.

I spent one whole Saturday building you a sandbox in the backyard; I painted it white, and filled it with sand from the hardware store. The first time I showed it to you; you wanted nothing to do with it, which was disappointing. I finally picked you up and set you in the middle, and you cried at the sand getting on your shoes. You were always neat and tidy that way.

I decided to let you discover it on your own, and you would later sit in that sandbox for hours, playing, and singing the ABC song while your mother hung out the wash on the clothes line, or I worked around the backyard.

My earlier job put me out of town for most of the week, but my current job kept me home at nights. After supper we would do stuff while your mother cleaned up after supper and worked around the house.

I mounted a swing in the overhead garage door opening and used to swing you on that, until we later bought you a metal swing set for the backyard.

We bought a rear seat for my bicycle and we would go for long bike rides and to the park to play on the swings and slides. You typically chose the tallest slide first, and this would scare me to death with you climbing that high ladder. I would climb with you, then go back down, and run around to catch you at the bottom. You showed a look of terror in your eyes coming down, but as I caught you at the bottom, you would always say more, more, to do it again.

There was also a pond at the park and we would fish frequently, using pieces of hot dogs as bait. I would help you catch little perch using your Mickey Mouse fishing pole and you would want to hug the fish, and put your little finger in their mouths, before we put them back into the water.

Living at this house is where you went Trick or Treating for the first time, and that look of amazement was there again at being able to ring a door bell and people would just give you candy. You wanted to visit all the houses in our neighborhood but your little legs quickly wore out, as the houses in this subdivision were built up on high ground with many steps to the front door. I saw you tiring and wanted to take you home, but you begged me to carry you and keep going.

At your first Cubs game when the crowd sang, "Take me out to the ballgame" during the seventh inning stretch, you cried because this was supposed to be just your daddy singing this song to you at bedtime.

We moved again shortly to another ranch house and you helped as we painted the rooms and fixed the place up before moving in. We did some furniture shopping for the house and you left your favorite blanket at the store. This became a huge emergency to get it back, but we did.

You liked to stand atop my feet when I walked you to bed at night and read you a story. You liked "Burt and Ernie Spring Cleaning" which I read to you many dozens of times. You also liked "If I Lived Alone" and heard that

story enough times you would read it aloud to yourself from the pictures, before you even understood the words.

I also used to sing you Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, as well as Take me out to the Ballgame as go to sleep songs.

We moved a few times and consistently in the wintertime, as this was apparently corporate policy. We bought three houses because of job changes, promotions and transfers, and I never saw the yard or roofs with any of them until the following spring. You came to me one spring day acting sad, asking me to fix your swing set because it was broken. I explained that we took it apart for moving, and stored the pieces out on the deck until spring. You helped me put it back together, and I taught you about tools, bolts, nuts, and spacers.

When you got older, I spent an entire three-day Memorial Day weekend building and assembling a wooden swing set, having multiple swings, crow's nest, rope ladder, and slide. You would play and have picnic lunches with the neighborhood girls there, which I would deliver while I worked in my home office. Love, Dad

To be continued…

Your Growing up, Story Two

Using materials left over from remodeling the basement of our house, I decorated the interior of your playhouse. I purchased a 10 by 12 foot shed earlier in the spring, and placed this in the backyard next to your swing set. I used the back half for the snow blower, lawnmower, garden tiller, and the yard tools that would no longer fit in the attached garage because of your bikes, toys, and such. I put a pegboard divider in between for airflow, and put a Dutch door and a hexagon attic window in the front side facing your sandbox. I used these leftover basement materials to wainscot the interior for your playset of table, chairs, refrigerator, and oven. I installed a small above ground swimming pool next to your playhouse for you to swim with your friends.

In the winter, I would take you sledding down the big hill over on the golf course. You loved going down, but would shortly tire and ask me to carry you back up the hill.

When we drove the two hours north to visit your grandparents, you would ask me to wake you like a Princess when we arrived. I would open the back door and give you a kiss on the cheek to awaken you. Sometimes I knew that you just pretended to be asleep, but I didn't care.

You played Alice in your elementary school production of Alice in Wonderland. I was super proud of your singing and acting." Where are you taking me? I am just a little girl."

In the summer, we would take rides on the local park roads and you would love going over the speed bumps fast.

At Halloween, we would do pumpkin carving and you helped dig out the pumpkin guts. I would do the carving of the face under your recommendations and approval.

When you were young, you loved the many baby cousins present in our large family. Whenever we were in a hospital visiting someone, you would ask me to take you to the maternity floor to view the newborn babies through the nursery window. Later in high school, you would volunteer as a candy striper in the pediatric intensive care unit, or PICU, at the local hospital. You would make photos and videos of those babies for the friends and family who weren't allowed into the PICU. You came home sad frequently, as from week to week some of them wouldn't make it.

I coached your baseball teams age 4 (T-Ball) to age 14 (girls softball) and the Coach-Pitch and Machine-Pitch leagues in between. At the younger age leagues, most kids would pick up rocks from the ball field, kick the dirt, and watch birds fly over more than play actual baseball. The four-year-old league was real fun and the parents would bring blankets to have a picnic on the sidelines. No score was kept, and there was a lot of laughing at watching the uncoordinated attempts at catching and throwing the ball. The girls would typically watch a batted ball until it stopped rolling and then run to go get it. The boys would

all converge on a rolling ball and end up in a big heap and cloud of dust fighting over the ball. I don't believe we got any outs at first base that whole year.

The writer and comedian Dave Barry once reflected, "If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will chose to save the infant's life without even checking to see if there are men on base." That is one difference between boys and girls.

The next baseball season I worked to correct this by wrangling free ice cream cone tickets from a local fast food company. Any player who caught a popup in the air would receive one of these tickets, and you all learned to move toward the ball, and to catch it in the air.

You hit nerf balls starting at age two and we later practiced hitting off a tee with a tethered ball, catching grounders and popups in the back yard near daily during the summers. When you would miss the ball, and it hit you and you cried, I would yell at the ball for being naughty for hitting my little girl and throw it hard into the ground, and your tears would change to laughter. You were a girly girl, no headfirst slides into home plate like your closest girl cousin. You made it clear to me that you weren't getting sweaty or dirty, you were not a boy, and became upset that I wouldn't allow you to wear your dangly ear rings to play a ballgame. You had your teammates all touch a trolls dolls hair for good luck before the game.

At age nine, I wanted you to experience playing hardball as I did, and the only way you would play would be machine pitch. Like most girls, you were afraid of kids pitching, especially boys, a hardball overhand to you. As your coach, I needed to drag a small generator and a pitching machine around to the various fields where we played around the city without any available electricity. You ran hard, but I can't say fast. You threw and caught the ball well. Taller than many of the kids on the team, you showed good hands and fielding range at your usual first base position.

I traveled a lot for work in the early days, but as I was given the time and opportunity, I played in various softball leagues over the years, and you and your mother would come to watch.

The later leagues you played in were formed from a player draft and the other coaches were astonished when on draft day I selected girls in the early rounds. You would only play if lots of girls joined the team. These teams were co-ed up until the later softball leagues.

When you were about 12, I needed to put a new roof on our house. I gathered some buddies to help do the job. Determined to be involved and not miss any fun, I allowed you to come up on the ranch house roof to help. After the shingle bundles were piled on the roof peak, you would deliver small bundles of the shingles to the guys who were nailing them on. We used pneumatic nail guns, so the work

moved fast and you couldn't keep up the supply. When you started to complain and whine, the guys started calling you "Shinglerella." "Hey Shinglerella, I need some more over here", they would call to you. You didn't like this too much, but I helped and you worked hard to do the job.

Starting when you were eight or nine we began traveling up north for annual vacations, renting cabins, and pontoon boats. We would take your cousin along and the two of you became like sisters over the years. You were both competitive in fishing, and would keep track of how many you each caught, usually about a hundred or so during the week. When one caught a fish and I was taking it off the hook, the other would move to fish that exact spot on the boat. You both designated me "worm boy" and when the fish ate your worm you would ask me for a new one, or as you would call out, "worm me, worm boy". I was also designated as "fish boy" to remove the small perch or blue gills off the hook with a needle nosed pliers. When you turned sixteen I made you both divide the tasks, and do them yourselves. This was mostly a catch and release experience, but occasionally I would filet these and make you what I called Lake Fish McNuggets. You also liked helping picking out the pontoon boat each year and making sure your ride contained a sufficient number of cup holders for your drinks and snacks. In the mornings with the boat docked at the cabin, you liked to pretend that the two of you

lived on a yacht, and I served you both breakfast there. You would both call me garçon, as a waited on you.

While attending elementary school you started to complain of headaches, wanting to come home early from school, and having difficulty with the homework. I recalled the poor guy in my Army Basic training days, and we took you for an eye exam and discovered you needed glasses. The first day after you got them you came home from school and when I asked about how you like them, you proudly proclaimed now you can read what the teacher writes on the blackboard.

After you graduated grade school, I encouraged you to take a couple summer enrichment classes at a local public middle school during the summer. I suggested a foreign language class to determine if you liked the idea, before signing up for a class in middle school. You picked a French language class and also picked another fun class where you rode bicycles around town to learn the history. Later you would take French in middle and high school and able to test out in college and able to obtain those free credits.

One year we accepted a French foreign exchange student for the summer and he became like the brother you didn't have. You showed him some of the things teenagers did in America; theme parks, movies, and shopping. This experience then later gave you the opportunity to travel to France one year over Christmas break, and stay with his parent's family for a few days.

When you got old enough, I bought you a small inexpensive car and took you to practice in the parking lot of the nearby school, and on the local country roads. You liked playing the radio loud during these practice sessions but we argued about this because I wanted you to focus on driving. Your argument was if the radio played softly you would have to concentrate to hear, but if loud, you could focus more on driving. I saw that astonished look on you again, when I simply shut the radio off. You apparently hadn't factored-in this scenario, as a possible outcome.

Now having your temporary driver's license, you would drive to school in the mornings, with me riding shotgun. You didn't like the way that I drove by cutting through the countryside. You liked going through the city better. At one point, you needed to ask me "where do I turn to go the way I like to go." That was you, stubborn like your mother.

I tried teaching you how to take care of your car; change the oil, change a tire, and things like that but you weren't interested. I ended up taking care of the car for you, at times loaning you my Jeep while I worked on it.

You also tried explaining how much sense it made for you to park inside the garage during the winter, having me park outside as you left earlier in the morning and somehow you had less time for scraping off snow and ice. That particular logic didn't work on me, but you did get me to install a remote starter in your car which turned into a horrendous all day job on that little sports car. You could

then warm the car up using a remote starter control from inside the house.

A year later, you decided you wanted a newer sportier car, but I advised against this due to high repair, fuel, and insurance costs. You and your mother prevailed however, and you agreed to pay half the cost. At the closing, you suggested that your mother write the check and you would pay her back later. I insisted that you write your check for half the amount and she would write the other check. As you wrote out the check in the showroom office, you sighed that you couldn't believe you were writing a check for most of the money you had saved. I told you that this is precisely why I wanted you to write it, and to remember this experience each time you drive that car. In the end, the car was too expensive for you to operate, and was replaced with a more economical model for use while you attended college.

I can remember walking into your bedroom in the evenings, and seeing you multitasking your high school home work. The Top 40 playing on a radio, a computer screen chat window open with your friends, a web browser open for research, and a word processor document open for writing your assignment. This is how you worked. In this seeming chaos, you called in song requests and received one-ring phone calls on our land line. Your mother and I obviously knew that these calls weren't for us.

While you did this, you would sometimes call me on the phone intercom when I was working in my home office with your requests. Using your saddest voice, you would tell me that you were terribly thirsty and tired, and were assigned too much homework, and then request a chocolate malt. When you were little, I would sit you up on the kitchen counter and we would make these together. We would put the ice cream scoops into a blender; add a few tablespoons of malt mix and some chocolate syrup, which you called the goopy stuff, and some whole milk. We would take turns pushing the blender button, and when done you would look closely as I removed the top and you would giggle when the ice cream mix burped. Now as a teenager, you wanted it delivered.

Of course, you did your homework on a computer starting with your final fifth grade writing assignment when you selected a Hawaiian island, where coincidently Bill and Melinda Gates were married, as the subject for your paper. You were the only one in your class to create a research paper which included both computer generated text and graphics. You used a laptop in your room from teenager on, and once asked me for a credit card, before you knew what that was, because you discovered this "really cool place" called avon.com. You previously used game and drill software like the Jumpstart incremental elementary grade series, some typing software, Spelling and Reading

Blaster, the Reader and Math Rabbit series as well as the Arthur teaching series.

Prior to that, you used a large screen computer that I setup for you in my office. You could research on the web, and create documents using a wireless keyboard and mouse, but mostly you like playing a game called "You don't know Jack", which was a hilarious trivia game.

The public middle and high schools where we lived were crowded, somewhat dangerous, and academically marginal. I wanted you to have more options than I did upon graduation. I paid for a ridiculously expensive private school, which challenged and prepared you to be accepted into an extremely competitive BSN program at the university. Your dream since a little girl, through hospital candy striper, daycare helper, and babysitter, was to be a nurse who took care of babies — and now you are. Love, Dad

Epilogue

After two years of Army's intensely rigorous drudgery, the immersion in computers throughout his intense and varied work history were how Lefty developed the skills to start his first business. They then later became his life. His work and personal life were mediated by the computer screens he viewed. At times, it was like he had gone into the other side of the screen and was enveloped by the zeros and ones.

Computers were essential for running his for-profit business, as in addition to building them from scratch for himself and others, as he used them for invoicing, general accounting, payroll, taxes, creation of advertising materials, job quotations, email communication, web research, and document creation.

His custom built computers and those he purchased and modified, were essential for his customers to provide services to their clients, delivering Meals on Wheels, elderly and disabled home visits, and maintaining various consumer databases. They allowed visit scheduling and the delivering home care services across three counties, the ordering of repair parts, or scheduling appointments. They also became essential for communications, and for compliance with government business regulations. They we essential for the college students who sought better jobs and better lives.

They were essential for his handicapped clients to participate in the world around them, pursue their interests, curiosities, and to live a fuller life.

They were essential but yet underutilized, for the education of children. As an idealist, Lefty sought to correct this only to be further discouraged by the limitations of state government controlled, and locally governed public educational systems, and the dubious intentions and motivations of those in charge.

With the nonprofit business he expanded his vision to try to ensure that all had access to these tools. The simple mission was to bridge the digital divide of access to the skills and to the unprecedented educational and communication tools which the personal computer, and the Internet had become. He sought to level the playing field in the competition for jobs and education.

But now having closed both of his businesses and retired, he wasn't quite done just yet…

Up Next

In 2013 Microsoft or MS, announced that the next version of Windows would be called Windows 10. They would skip over the next numerically sequential version, which would have been 9 for some unknown reason. This time however they decided to release a Technical Preview or TP, much earlier in development than they ever before. This time it was perhaps pre-beta or what was called, Alpha code. They also had recently gone through their first employee layoff ever, including massive personnel cuts in their software testing departments.

To be continued…

Afterword

The process of getting a book published, especially by a first time novelist, is quite daunting and can take many, many, years. It involves sending hundreds of carefully crafted email queries to a subjective audience of agents, and publishers, as well as an awful lot of ego deflating rejection. Hundreds of rejections in fact. Some samples follow.

Dear Author,
Many thanks for sending me your submission, which I read with interest. I'm afraid, however, that I have decided not to offer representation. Our business is subjective by nature and another agent may well feel differently. I wish you the best of luck.
Sincerely,

Dear Author,
Thanks so much for letting us take a look at your materials, and please forgive me for responding with a form letter. The volume of submissions we receive, however, makes it impossible to correspond with everyone personally.
Unfortunately, the project you describe does not suit our list at this time. We wish you the best of luck in finding an agent and publisher for your work, and we thank you, once again, for letting us consider your materials.
Sincerely,

Dear Author,
Thank you for sending me your work. Unfortunately, it's not right for this office. I wish you the best of luck.
Sincerely,

Dear Author,
Thanks so much for sending your query – I appreciate the chance to take a look at your project. I'm sorry to say, though, that I'm going to step aside instead of asking to read more.
Please bear in mind that everybody has different tastes and interests – my decision is based on my present workload, and also based on the kind of material that I'm presently representing. That said, this is a crazily subjective business: I absolutely think you should keep looking for representation because what works for one agent (or publisher) may not work as well for another. I'm afraid, though, that I cannot recommend someone for it. Very best of luck!

Dear Author,
Thank you for sending your work for my consideration. Unfortunately, this query was not intriguing enough to inspire me to offer representation or further consideration of your project.
I'm grateful that you have afforded me this opportunity to find out about you and your work, and I wish you the best of luck on your current and future writing endeavors.
Best of luck,

Dear Author,
Thanks for your query regarding The Insider. I'm sorry to say that it didn't grab me enough to request a partial manuscript but I wish you the best of luck in finding the right agent for your work.
Sincerely,

Dear Author,
Thank you for your query. The novel does sound engaging, frankly, but my agency's fiction list is extremely limited in the slots available and as such I find I need to be quite circumscribed in what I request to read. While I haven't moved away from fiction representation completely I have more or less decided that I am not going to be accepting fiction manuscripts for the time being. I wish you the best of luck in finding an agent at another company that will more closely match your needs.
Sincerely,

Dear Author,
Thank you for your patience in hearing from us about your book. We receive over 300 submissions from authors every month.
To get the not fun news out of the way, I've unfortunately decided to step aside on representation. My primary reason relates to your platform. Publishers expect authors to have well-developed platforms prior to seeking publication so that they have a built in audience when the book comes out. If a publisher doesn't believe that the author can sell many thousands of copies on their own, they are averse to taking a project on. This is particularly true of the major NY publishers, whom we pitch to. While I can tell you are doing good work in developing your platform, it still feels a bit early to me to approach NY publishers. I sense I would struggle to find your book a home and for that reason, I've decided to pass.
Yes, it is a sad state of affairs when platforms are more important than the writing and the author.
Sorry it isn't better news.
Best to you,

These rejections make you question yourself, your ideas, your writing, and perhaps your very existence. It also involves sending many dozens of partial and complete manuscripts in the quest to find someone to represent your work, someone to publish it and someone to market it to your anticipated audience.

Sometimes it involves multiple cross-country trips to writers conferences, with pitch sessions to agents and critique sessions with editors. Sometimes it involves the use of mass transit. I will share one such experience to you here.

> My wife and I traveled to Chicago to attend a writer's workshop, which would also give me a chance to pitch my first novel to some literary agents in attendance there, at a three dollars per minute fee.
>
> We also wanted to catch a ballgame at Sox Park, since the Cubs were out of town, and do some other touristy things. My wife had not traveled much and I promised her a nice lunch on the moving train, and a scenic trip through the countryside to the city. Not to mention a ballgame, and the chance to see some big city sights.
>
> *It could have been nice*…but the train was an hour and a half late and we got hungry waiting.
>
> *It could have been nice*…but as we boarded the train and sat in the dining car we were told that it was closed, they didn't have any food anyway, so please get out so we can clean. We weren't even offered a lousy glass of water.
>
> *It could have been nice*…but we were told to go sit in the observation car and get some food from the snack bar in the car directly below. Navigating those steep narrow steps in a rocking and pitching train car is an adventure in itself. The lack of signage mostly ensures that you will get lost on a trip to whatever bathroom was not currently out of service.
>
> *It could have been nice*…but the café food inventory was down to a half dozen beers and a few bags of chips.
>
> *It could have been nice*…sitting there in the observation car eating our chips and drinking our beers, watching the countryside through the dirty windows,

but we were kicked out shortly because they wanted to clean.

It could have been nice… when we checked into our expensive downtown hotel room but it was small and old. Presidents had stayed there they said, but not since the 40s, which apparently corresponded to the last time the place was remodeled.

It could have been nice…but since we arrived in town late, the ballpark late, and we missed the start of the ball game. Not to mention batting practice.

It could have been nice…because I caught a foul ball at the game, but the crowd booed my Cubs shirt and World Series Championship hat when I held up the ball, but then audibly sighed and cheered when I handed it to a young boy in a Sox jersey.

It could have been nice…but the writing workshop was inconvenient, simplistic, cliché-ridden, and the literacy agents arrogant and condescending.

It could have been nice…since Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park was in full display, but even a kiddie ice cream cone will cost you five bucks.

It could have been nice…after a cycle rickshaw ride to Navy Pier and eating supper at Harry's Cary's outdoor café, but some religious zealots, with apparently nothing constructive to do, held signs and stood in the walkway agitating people about coming home to Jesus.

It could have been nice…but cab rides around town were a life threatening adventure, with Somalian, Syrian, and Ethiopian cab drivers trying their best to kill each other over fares, both in and out of their cars.

It could have been nice…seeing the fishes at the Shed, but a $30 ticket to the Oceanarium did not mean that you wouldn't be kicked out when the show started. "Another five bucks please."

It could have been nice…because the Sunday return trip was on-time, but the waiting rooms were overcrowded and a trio of pigeons walked around eating scraps from around the seats and off the dirty floors.

It could have been nice…but the boarding process for the return trip was disorganized, and gave the feel

> of being loaded into cattle cars, similar to my Army experiences. Mooo!
>
> *It could have been nice*…as we were looking forward to having our supper on the return trip, but we were told to stay in our seats for ticket collection and then later that the dining room was closed, and to try the café.
>
> We did speak with a very nice young conductor, but he could only provide some sincere but ineffective condolences, with a warning that a bad public review could lead to privatization.
>
> So I have a new motto suggestion for your rail line: *"It could have been nice."*

The critical nature of the these queries is relentlessly driven by *experts* in contradictory breathless tones.

"If they don't like the first sentence, your email will be deleted or ignored."

"You need to hook them with the first sentence, no, the first paragraph."

"You should include or not include a synopsis, a bio, make sure you explain how it ends, and no, don't ever expose the ending in a query."

"Tell us the genre, while we keep changing the definitions and adding new ones."

"Tell us why you are qualified to write this book, but keep it short."

"Write to a specific genre, a specific popular audience."

"Don't try to be a square peg for our round hole system."

"Tell us what other books yours is like, but no, don't you dare compare your work to others. Until you are published, you have no legitimate opinions, you are nothing, you are no one. You are not a novelist, an author, or even a writer. You are unpublished, you are nothing, yet."

"Go ahead and query us, if you dare to."

There are of course, paid seminars you can attend and a massive number of books you can buy to learn how to write query letters. There are sessions you can attend at conferences. Remember, an entire industry has been built around this.

No one wants to actually read your manuscript, they just want to accept it or reject it based on this short query. Much like Human Resources Managers thinning the stack by rejecting

resumes based on the color of the paper or the typeface used, rather than the content.

So here we go, the industry wants to sell editing, wants to shape books into their image of what it should be. Make it better, or just make it different, you decide. Oh, but wait, you are not a published author, so your opinion does not count.

And don't make us work with you to put the final commercial polish on your work. We are like a baseball team looking for a Hall of Fame player right out of high school. We don't want to invest in the cost of minor league training. Yes, and don't use any formatting, or graphics for that matter. Just plain ugly text, like a $2.99 eBook, you know.

The literary agents are for the most part young women, looking for what is hot, the newest trend. Don't send anything that is not YA, middle grade, or transgender related please. No Hemmingway's or Twains will get in this locked door.

Don't write and send anything that challenges the supposed A.D.D. of the supposed current market demographic for books. It must fit a certain genre and be a specific length. More than 120,000 words will never get printed, but yet they do. First time author books must be short, but sometimes they are not. Well, there are always exceptions, they say. Much like a realtor, they only want commissions what they know they can sell.

All of these overwrought, cliché-driven subjective contradictory instructions lead to over written works. It's the first page that is critical, no wait, the first ten pages, no actually it is the first chapter that is critical to success. What you end up with is overwritten pages, that remind me of how Michael Bolton used to over sing songs.

An entire industry has developed to convince you that you need to buy editing services, and cover design, or your book will be sent to the ash pile of history. Author testimonials drive this nonsense.

Occasionally, writing all these queries and receiving all the rejections, can make one a bit goofy and resort to writing flashbacks of my early Beatle listening days.

Fiction Book Author.(Sung to the tune of Paperback Writer)

Fiction Book Author, Fiction Book Author.

Dear Sir or Madam, can you read my book?

It took me years to write it, will you take a look?

It's based on the life of a man so dear,

It’s an edgy story, that all should hear.

So I want to be a Fiction Book author.

A Fiction Book author.

It's an epic story of a passionate man,

Who’s idealism, makes him take a stand.

A teacher, writer and computer geek,

Retired now and I want to be a Fiction Book author.

A Fiction Book author.

It's six hundred pages, give or take a few.

I'll be editing more, in a week or two.

I could make it shorter, if you like the style.

I can change it around, but it will take a while.

I really want to be, a Fiction Book author.

A Fiction Book author.

If you really like it, you can buy the rights.

It could make us millions, almost overnight.

If you must return it, it will cause me ache,

Cause I really need, my very first break.

Since I want to be a Fiction Book author.

A Fiction Book Author!

A playlist of musicians & music

Paul McCartney and Wings
Band on the Run
Uncle Albert-Admiral Halsey
Hey Jude, live

Neil Young
Pocahontas
Down by the River, extended length
Thrasher
Cowgirl in the Sand, extended length
Ramada Inn
A Man Needs a Maid

Mark Knopfler
Are we in trouble now
Brothers in Arms
Back To Tupelo
Our Shangri-La

Traveling Wilburys
Last night
Tweeter and the monkey man

Arlo Guthrie
Alice's Restaurant Massacree
The Motorcycle Song

Elton John
Country Comfort
Burn Down The Mission

Rod Stewart
Handbags and Gladrags
Maggie May
Cut across Shorty

Mott the Hoople
All the Way from Memphis
Ballad of Mott The Hoople
I wish I was your Mother

Harry Chapin
Taxi
Better place to be
Mr. Tanner
What Made America Famous

Tom Petty
Melinda
I Keep Crawling Back to You
Free Falling, live
Running down a dream
Straight into Darkness, live
Breakdown, live
It's Good to be King, live
Rhino Skin

Counting Crows
Holiday in Spain
Goodnight Elisabeth
Rain King

Bob Dylan
Mississippi
Desolation Row
Shelter from the Storm
Lily, Rosemary and The Jack Of Hearts
Tangled up in Blue

Willie Nelson
Hands on the Wheel
Hard to Be an Outlaw
Bring it On
Highwayman

Steely Dan
Do it again
Brooklyn

Curtis Mayfield
Freddie's Dead
Superfly

Carole King
You've Got a Friend
So Far Away
It's Too Late

Jackson Browne
For Everyman
Lives in the Balance
Casino Nation
Mercury Blues

Warren Haynes
Glory Road
Beautifully Broken
Fallen Down
Cortez the Killer

John Mellencamp
What if I came looking
Walk tall
Small Town, acoustic

The Eagles
Take it Easy
Do Something
Long road out of Eden
Desperado

Savoy Brown
Ride on Babe
Hellbound Train

Carlos Santana
Black Magic Woman
Samba Pa Ti
Europa

Joe Walsh
Rocky Mountain Way
Meadows
Analog Man

Deep Purple
Smoke on the water
Highway Star
Woman From Tokyo

Led Zeppelin
Babe I'm Gonna Leave You

Dazed and Confused

Dave Mathews Band

Where Are You Going

So Much to Say

Van Morrison
Into the Mystic
Wasted Years
Lonely Avenue
Streets of Arklow
Allman Brothers
Whipping Post
Midnight Rider

Thin Lizzy
Jailbreak
Whiskey In The Jar
Fight or Fall, Extended version-Rough Mix

Phil Collins
In the Air Tonight
Another Day In Paradise
I Wish it Would Rain Down

The Beach Boys
Little Deuce Coupe
In my Room
John Fogerty
Hundred and ten in the shade
Who'll stop the Rain
Lynyrd Skynyrd
Simple Man
Free Bird

John Lennon
Steel and Glass
How do you sleep?

John Prine
Angel from Montgomery
Hello In There
Ain't Hurtin' Nobody
Illegal Smile

Robin Trower

Bridge of Sighs

In This Place
About to Begin
REO Speedwagon
Golden Country
157 Riverside Avenue

Can't fight this feeling

Heart
Dreamboat Anne
Magic Man

Pink Floyd
Comfortably Numb

Dogs and Pigs
Another Brick In The Wall

Don Henley
Sunset Grill
The Heart Of The Matter
Miss Ghost
My Thanksgiving
Taking You Home
B.B. King
The Thrill Is Gone
All Over Again
Rolling Stones

Start me Up

Wild Horses
Fleetwood Mac
Silver Girl
Peacekeeper
Destiny Rules
Steal Your Heart Away
Brown Eyes
That's All for Everyone

Wishbone Ash
Throw Down The Sword

Sometime World

George Harrison (Live in Japan)
While My Guitar Gently Weeps
Roll over Beethoven
Isn't it a Pity
Bruce Springsteen
Glory Days
Racing in the Streets, live

Thunder Road

Steve Miller
Swing Town
Serenade

Jethro Tull
Rocks On The Road

Farm on the Freeway

Peter Frampton
Lines on my Face
Do you feel like I do

Janis Ian
Stars
Jesse
Kid Rock

Born Free

God Save Rock n Roll
Johnny Cash
Hurt
The Man Comes Around
I Hung My Head

Questions for the author

You have indicated that the idea for your first novel came thirty years ago. What forces drove you to complete the book now?

I had the time to dedicate to this endeavor. The two things that cured my writing block are first, working at writing which I did not have the time to work at for many years. This provided some motivation that led me to work at writing.

Second, within this process I discovered a couple hooks for the novel outside the original idea of a boy's life in baseball. The first hook is the whole Forrest Gump meets Bill Gates theme, putting Lefty into the middle of the most important events, within personal computer and Internet history. The second hook is the flashbacks of his life as told in a series of stories to an estranged daughter, and a girlfriend. These stories then cover baseball, music, cars, computers, women, and things he loves, and loves writing about.

What are your hobbies?

Beyond the computer stuff, I create music playlists, including one named the Black Album, "Beyond the Beatles" which holds 140 high quality digital songs, alternating John, Paul, George, and Ringo. I create these for my Pono player using 44,100 Hz 100% lossless compressed .flac files, not the 5% of the original studio sound of the now common lossy compressed mp3's. This allows the Beatles to exist for me for another eight hours, but sadly without the classic Beatle three part harmonies. I also create play lists for Tom Petty, Neil Young, Jackson Browne, and others. I enjoy listening to Deep Tracks on satellite radio because I do not believe a songs length should be artificially limited to the 3:05 AM standard.

I reside in the beautiful farm and forest countryside in Wisconsin with my loving wife. I retired from active work in the same year as Derek Jeter, sans the walk-off game winning heroics. Jeter retired near the top of his game, leaving us wanting more, which is the best way to go out. I continue playing with computer technology, watching baseball on TV, reading and challenging myself with new learning and self-directed pursuits.

I did not know if I could ever have this book published. I personally liked all the stories, but I did not know if I could teach myself to be a good enough writer to be able to put in the necessary polish to make these stories commercially successful.

Write to the author at lefty@tcw.org

The Black Album Playlist

Song	Artist	Album
I'm Losing You (2010 Remix)	John Lennon and The Flux Fiddlers and The Plastic Ono Band and Yoko Ono	Double Fantasy (Stripped Down)
Monkberry Moon Delight (2012 Remaster)	Linda McCartney and Paul McCartney	RAM
This Guitar (Can't Keep From Crying) (Platinum Bonus Track)	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
Wings	Ringo Starr	Ringo 2012
Going Down On Love	John Lennon	Walls and Bridges
Let Me Roll It	Paul McCartney and Wings	Wingspan (US Version)
Far East Man	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
I'm The Greatest	Ringo Starr	Ringo
Working Class Hero	John Lennon	Plastic Ono Band
Heart Of The Country (2012 Remaster)	Linda McCartney and Paul McCartney	RAM
All Things Must Pass (Demo)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
Only You (and You Alone)	Ringo Starr	Very Best Of
Watching The Wheels	John Lennon	Signature Box
Band On The Run	Paul McCartney and Wings	Wingspan (US Version)
Dark Horse	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
Photograph	Ringo Starr	Ringo
Steel and Glass	John Lennon	Signature Box
Biker Like An Icon	Paul McCartney	Paul Is Live
Devil's Radio (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	Cloud Nine
Down and Out	Ringo Starr	Ringo
Look At Me	John Lennon	Signature Box
No More Lonely Nights	Paul McCartney	All The Best (US Version)
I'd Have You Any Time (Early Take)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
Liverpool 8	Ringo Starr	Liverpool 8
How Do You Sleep?	John Lennon	Imagine
Nineteen Hundred and Eighty Five (2010 Digital Remaster)	Paul McCartney and Wings	Band On The Run (Standard)
Cheer Down (Live) (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	Live In Japan
It Don't Come Easy	Ringo Starr	Ringo

Surprise Surprise (Sweet Bird Of Paradox)	John Lennon	Walls and Bridges
Smile Away (2012 Remaster)	Linda McCartney and Paul McCartney	RAM
Beware Of Darkness	George Harrison	All Things Must Pass
I Was Walkin'	Ringo Starr	Vertical Man
Jealous Guy	John Lennon feat The Flux Fiddlers and The Plastic Ono Band	Imagine
Jenny Wren	Paul McCartney	Chaos and Creation In The Backyard
Here Comes The Moon (Demo Version) (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	George Harrison
Nashville Jam (1995 Digital Remaster)	Ringo Starr	Beaucoups Of Blues
It's So Hard	John Lennon	Signature Box
Tomorrow	Wings	Wingspan (US Version)
Faster (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	George Harrison
Have You Seen My Baby	Ringo Starr	Very Best Of
Scared	John Lennon	Walls and Bridges
Uncle Albert / Admiral Halsey (2012 Remaster)	Linda McCartney and Paul McCartney	RAM
Maya Love	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
Coochy Coochy (1995 Digital Remaster)	Ringo Starr	Beaucoups Of Blues
Woman (2010 Remix)	John Lennon	Double Fantasy (Stripped Down)
Venus and Mars/Rockshow (Single Edit)	Wings	Wingspan (US Version)
Stuck Inside A Cloud	George Harrison	Brainwashed
Slow Down	Ringo Starr	Ringo 2012
Hold On	John Lennon	Signature Box
Dance Tonight	Paul McCartney	Memory Almost Full
Bye Bye Love	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
Fill In The Blanks	Ringo Starr	Y Not
Nobody Loves You (When You're Down and Out)	John Lennon	Signature Box
That Would Be Something (2011 Remaster)	Paul McCartney	McCartney (Special Edition)
Blow Away (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	George Harrison
Mystery Of The Night	Ringo Starr	Y Not
Oh My Love	John Lennon	Imagine

Dear Boy (2012 Remaster)	Linda McCartney and Paul McCartney	RAM
Pisces Fish	George Harrison	Brainwashed
Give It A Try	Ringo Starr	Liverpool 8
Old Dirt Road	John Lennon	Signature Box
Maybe I'm Amazed	Paul McCartney	Wingspan (US Version)
My Sweet Lord	George Harrison	All Things Must Pass
Walk With You	Ringo Starr	Y Not
Isolation	John Lennon	Plastic Ono Band
This Never Happened Before	Paul McCartney	Chaos and Creation In The Backyard
Let It Down (Original Guitar and Vocal Version / Bonus Track)	George Harrison	All Things Must Pass
Six O'clock (Extended Version)	Ringo Starr	Goodnight Vienna
Imagine	John Lennon	Imagine
Ram On (2012 Remaster)	Linda and Paul McCartney	RAM
Isn't It A Pity (Version Two)	George Harrison	All Things Must Pass
Step Lightly	Ringo Starr	Ringo
How?	John Lennon	Imagine
House Of Wax	Paul McCartney	Memory Almost Full
Not Guilty (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	George Harrison
King Of Broken Hearts	Ringo Starr	Vertical Man
The Luck Of The Irish	John Lennon and Yoko Ono	Signature Box
Take It Away	Paul McCartney	Tug Of War
So Sad	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
Island In The Sun	Ringo Starr	Postcards From Paradise
God	John Lennon	Signature Box
The Back Seat Of My Car (2012 Remaster)	Linda McCartney and Paul McCartney	RAM
Soft-Hearted Hana (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	George Harrison
You're Sixteen You're Beautiful (and you're mine)	Ringo Starr	Very Best Of
Out The Blue	John Lennon	Signature Box
Wanderlust	Paul McCartney	Tug Of War
The Light That Has Lighted The World (Demo)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
Y Not	Ringo Starr	Y Not
Going Down On Love	John Lennon	Signature Box
Too Much Rain	Paul McCartney	Chaos & Creation

This Song (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	Thirty Three & 1/3
What Goes On (Includes closing intro)	Ringo Starr & His All Starr Band	Live At The Greek Theatre 2008
Cleanup Time (2010 Remix)	John Lennon	Double Fantasy (Stripped Down)
Valentine Day (2011 Remaster)	Paul McCartney	McCartney (Special Edition)
Awaiting On You All (Early Take)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
Think About You	Ringo Starr	Liverpool 8
What You Got	John Lennon	Walls and Bridges
With A Little Luck (DJ Edit)	Wings	Wingspan (US Version)
Behind That Locked Door (Demo)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
One	Ringo Starr	Vertical Man
Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy) (2010)	John Lennon	Double Fantasy (Stripped Down)
At The Mercy	Paul McCartney	Chaos and Creation In The Backyard
Beware Of Darkness (Version One / Bonus Track)	George Harrison	All Things Must Pass
Not Looking Back	Ringo Starr	Postcards From Paradise
#9 Dream	John Lennon	Signature Box
Another Day	Paul McCartney	Wingspan (US Version)
Let It Be Me (Demo)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
No No Song	Ringo Starr	Goodnight Vienna
Remember	John Lennon	Signature Box
Letting Go (2014 Remaster)	Wings	Venus and Mars (Deluxe Edition)
Rising Sun	George Harrison	Brainwashed
If It's Love That You Want	Ringo Starr	Liverpool 8
Oh Yoko! (2010 Digital Remaster)	John Lennon	Imagine
Ballroom Dancing	Paul McCartney	Tug Of War
While My Guitar Gently Weeps	George Harrison	Live in Japan Disc 2
Let Love Lead	Ringo Starr	Postcards From Paradise
(Just Like) Starting Over (2010 Remix)	John Lennon	Double Fantasy Stripped Down
Magneto and Titanium Man (2014 Remaster)	Wings	Venus and Mars (Deluxe Edition)
Roll Over Beethoven (Live) (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	Live In Japan
Back Off Boogaloo	Ringo Starr	Goodnight Vienna

I Know (I Know)	John Lennon	Signature Box
Bluebird	Paul McCartney and Wings	Wingspan (US Version)
Baltimore Oriole (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	Somewhere In England
C'mon People	Paul McCartney	Off The Ground
Life Itself (2004 Digital Remaster)	George Harrison	Somewhere In England
Every Night (2011 Remaster)	Paul McCartney	McCartney (Special Edition)
This Guitar (Can't Keep From Crying)	George Harrison	The Apple Years 1968-75
Here Today	Paul McCartney	Tug Of War
Let 'Em In	Wings	All The Best (US Version)
All Things Must Pass (Demo)	George Harrison	Early Takes Volume 1
My Love	Paul McCartney and Wings	All The Best (US Version)
Let It Down	George Harrison	All Things Must Pass
Peace In The Neighborhoods	Paul McCartney	Off The Ground

This book is dedicated to my generations many hundreds of thousands of heroes lost or damaged due to their Vietnam War experience. They were never given the opportunity that I was to live their lives, fulfill their passions, and contribute to the best aspects of our shared American dream.

I mourn those no longer among us, and treasure the contributions and insights of the many early computer and Internet pioneers not mentioned. These include Robert William (Bob) Taylor, J. C. R. Licklider, George Pake, Jerome I. Elkind, David C. Evans, Jeff Rulifson, Charles M. Herzfeld, Larry Tesler, Alan Kay, Norm Abramson, Judy Estrin, David Clarke, and Lawrence G. Roberts, to name but a few.

About the author

I am a veteran of the U.N. Peace Keeping Force, a former Peace Corps volunteer, and I also taught at the secondary and post-secondary levels. I worked in corporate technical training and course development, technical document production. I was a one term public school board member and a multilevel baseball coach for ten years. I created, managed, and operated two small businesses involved in document production and computer integration for more than fifteen years each. I am now retired, and when not working on computers in my shop, I am writing in the computer user forums, writing fictional stories, or watching baseball games. I am seeking my first widely published book with the work on this manuscript, some of which spans thirty years, with most written within the past five years.

Acknowledgements

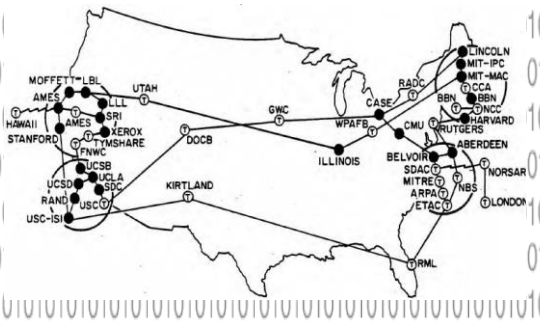
To my wife, who makes everything possible for me.

To my daughters, may this collection of words help them to better understand me.

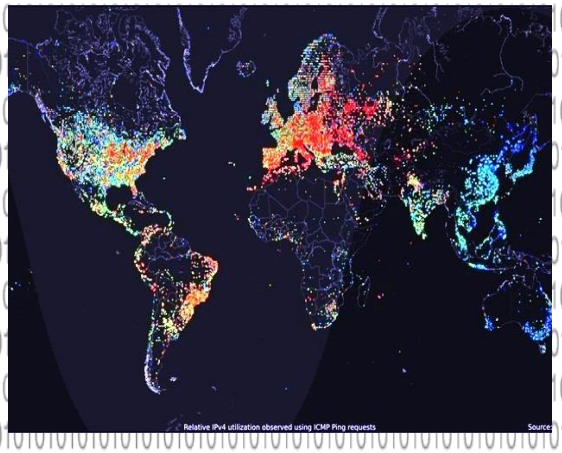
To the many proofreaders, whose excellent work helped edit, and refine these stories.

A special thank you to Jackson Browne, Warren Haynes, Tom Petty, Neil Young, Mark Knopfler, Van Morrison and other musicians too numerous to mention, who's lifetime catalogs of music frequently provided the background for this project.

This captivating story reveals the protagonist's idealism colliding with the actions of antagonists, Nixon, a software monopolist, and the ignorant, intolerant, and uninformed.



This third person narrative story, and first person personal stories within, examine the our hero's adventures through conflict and triumph as he works his dream jobs, lives out his passions, and learns life lessons growing as a person, and from employee, to businessman to elder idealist.

When our young idealistic hero sets out to follow his dreams and passions, little did he know he would become immersed in the awakening and growth of a world changing industry that would reach its peak, only to essentially disappear within his lifetime.

A lifelong journey unfolds revealing our protagonist maturing personally and professionally, while living planned and unplanned adventures within the rise and maturation of the personal computer revolution, and evolution of the ARPANET into the Internet.